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63rd year of publication

Faith in leaders on shaky ground

Brendan Kooy

Great men and women throughout history have been characterized by their ability to provide strong leadership during difficult times. The world fondly remembers Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Robert Borden and W.M. Mackenzie-King. These leaders have all proven themselves on the highest stage, demonstrating the ability to lead major nations through times of strife. Incapable leaders also get remembered, more for their mistakes than any wise decisions, to become legendary in their own way: R.B. Bennett, Neville Chamberlain, and (debatably) George W. Bush.

Our world today faces many challenges, from war in Southern Asia to the imminent threats of global warming to global poverty. None of these challenges, however, has a greater potential negative impact than the problems of the staggering global economy.

> *Negativity is not what Canada needs right now.*

While it is easy for some to minimize the issue of the economy in relation to the personal and human suffering caused by war and poverty across the world, it is truly eye-opening to consider the across-the-board ramifications that further economic collapse in the so-called developed world could cause.

Precarious politically

On a large scale, economic collapse could spell political collapse. At the recent G20 Summit in London, intelligence was provided to world leaders saying that as many as 20 nations across the world could suffer from serious political instability as a result of the economy. Not just the typically unstable developing nations, either – countries in places like Eastern Europe are in the same predicament. To reverse the progress these nations have made since the collapse of communism could be devastating, if not fatal, to organizations like the European Union and NATO.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper shakes hands with President Obama at the G20 summit in London, England. CBC

Even within historically rich and stable nations in the Western hemisphere, economic uncertainty is bound to create unrest. This has been demonstrated time and again throughout history – wherever there are large crowds of unemployed citizens, nations open themselves up to vacuums of power and influence being filled by the wrong individuals or groups.

On a political level, governments have been pressured into massive stimulus packages and financial commitments. Old fashioned infrastructure spending has been combined with enormous, unprecedented, taxpayer-money bailout packages for struggling industries. Governments continue to dig themselves into huge debts, with little or no concrete end in sight.

Lost in the worries about stocks and bonds is the plight of the less fortunate in the world. Also at the G20 Summit, world leaders pledged to give $1.1 trillion to aid developing countries with the effects of the economic downturn. But when the United States has injected nearly $800 billion into its own economy, is this amount sufficient? The ability of world leaders to pragmatically and effectively address the issues above in the coming months and years will undoubtedly define how they will be remembered.

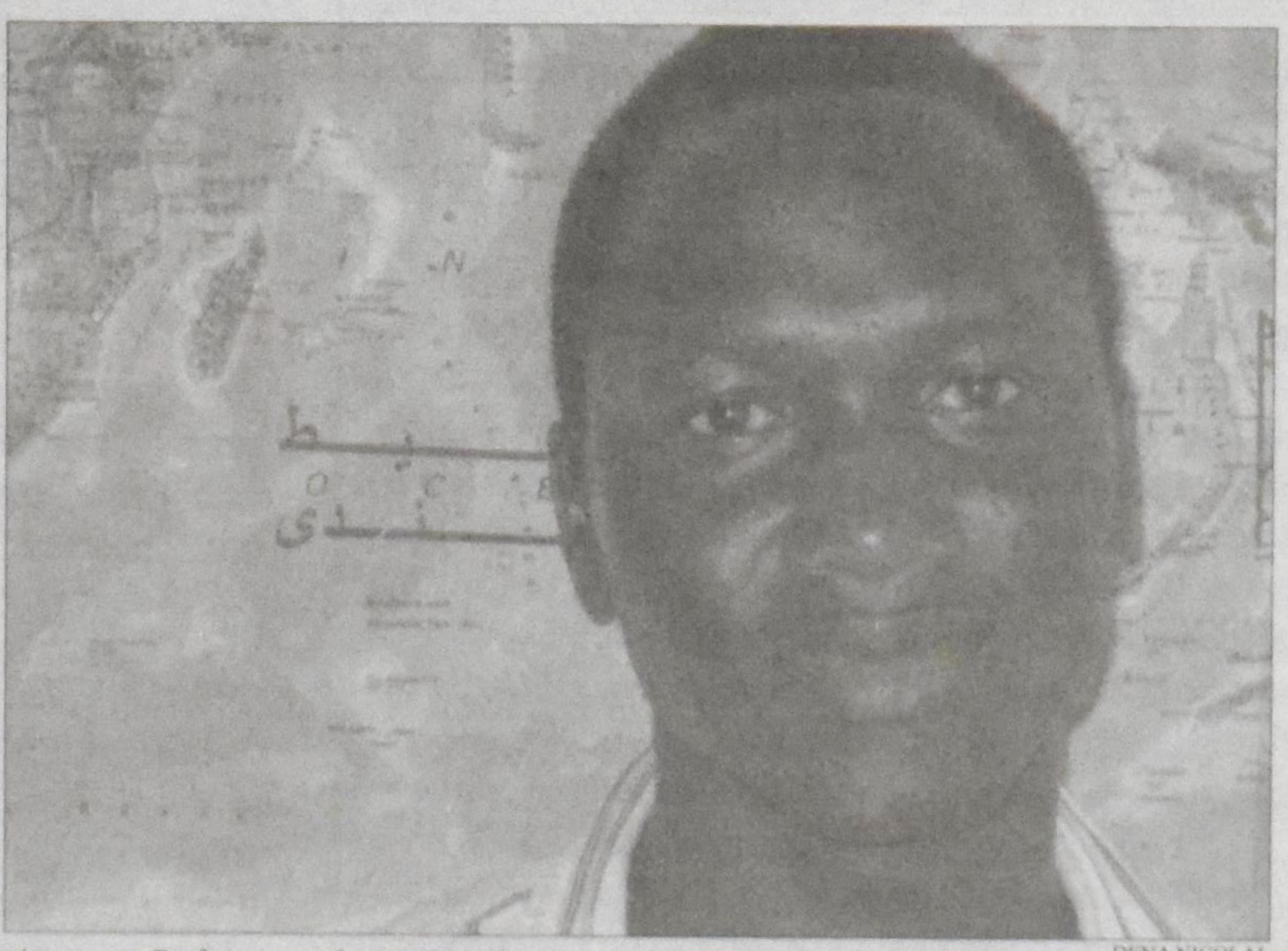
North American leaders

In the United States, Barack Obama continues to ride a massive swell of popularity after his grassroots-inspired election victory in November 2008. But even the mighty president has begun to experience criticism. Czech Prime Minister and EU President Mirak Topolanek recently called Obama's stimulus-laden economic rescue plan a "way to hell," echoing the sentiments of concerned French and German leaders. As job losses continue to accumulate as quickly as they did under the former administration, the pressure begins to rise.

See **Leaders** *on page 2*

Refugees find refuge:

One solution to Sudanese gangs in Egypt



Anwar, a Sudanese refugee, has finally made a home for himself in Egypt. DENA NICOLAI

Dena Nicolai

Anwar was 14 when he came to Egypt with his uncle, leaving parents and sisters behind in Sudan. He hoped for a better life than the possibilities in his homeland, which raged with civil war. Shortly after arriving in Cairo, however, he quit school; he was extremely lonely and looking elsewhere for a place to belong.

He soon found it in a group of other Sudanese youth. Interested in music and football (soccer in Canada) just like he was, they became a second family. They were also a way to make a name for himself as something besides simply a "Sudanese refugee." The fact that this group was also a gang wasn't a problem for a 15-year-old desperate to be a part of something.

It didn't take long before the better life that Anwar was pursuing nearly killed him. In a case of mistaken identity, a rival Sudanese gang attacked him. He spent four years in a gang, and became yet another victim of the Sudanese gang violence that is increasingly spilling out onto the streets of Cairo.

Many Sudanese families have been split up by the conflict back home, leaving a significant absence of fathers in many households.

See **Refugees** *on page 2*

News

Refugees . . . continued from page 1

Among those families with fathers, the mother often ends up being the main breadwinner, as it is easier for females to find employment as domestic help. This puts families at an even greater disadvantage culturally, as the norm in Sudanese society is for the women to stay in the home. If there is no father, the mother's employment leaves the children alone, often for days at a time.

Youth adrift

The Sudanese experience in Egypt is especially hard on the youth. In an effort to escape the alienation they feel in Egypt, they form their own family groups. Caught between two societies and often feeling ostracized from both, the Sudanese instead identify strongly with African-American culture and the glamorous lifestyles of African-American rappers and entertainment artists they see on MTV. The two main Sudanese gangs in Cairo, the "Lost Boys" and the "Outlaws," take their names from African-American rap groups. These titles also refer to the feeling of Sudanese youths in Egypt. The gang members, with their low-slung pants, chunky jewellery and baseball caps, can be seen guarding neighbourhoods they call New York, Chicago and Washington.

REUTERS

Marc, a member of the Outlaw gang, poses with "Los Angeles" written on his hands.

The violence among these gangs has been on the rise in the last four years, with the most infamous case being the public murder of 24-year-old Maliah Bekam on World Refugee Day in July 2007. Egyptian police, hesitant to intervene after prior criticism regarding treatment of Sudanese, step in only when the violence spreads outside the Sudanese community.

Hip-hop fosters hope

There are stories of hope emerging amidst the violence. Anwar survived the gang attack, and a few years later was invited by the staff of Refuge Egypt, a ministry of the Anglican/Episcopal church in Cairo, to a youth conference. Noticing his love of music, staff gave him the opportunity to play the guitar and introduced him to others his age. Several months after the conference, he had a dream in which he recalls the continuing question, "How long will you live like this?" Shortly afterwards, he quit the gang.

Today, Anwar is a staff member in the Youth Department at Refuge Egypt, one of the few organizations in the country that works specifically with Sudanese gangs. In 2007, Refuge Egypt started a hip-hop program, allowing youth to put their energy towards music. They meet once a week in a neighbourhood with a high Sudanese population and practice free-style rapping or hip-hop dancing. Through this work, the Refuge Egypt youth mentorship team hopes to replace the often negative connotations of hip hop and inspire the youth to create their own positive music.

The program also channels the youth's love of football by renting several fields throughout Cairo, depending on finances. These weekly football matches give the youth a safe space to come together, away from the crowded urban slums in which most of them live.

The Youth Department team also dreams of offering vocational training. Many youths express interest in learning a new skill, and the possibility of employment would provide hope, get them off the street and reduce gang violence.

Though many see the gangs as simply another problem accompanying the refugees, Anwar is clear: "I want people to remember that these youth are victims. They have lost a lot, and they don't know where they belong. They are destroyed upside-down psychologically, but there is hope through God's word, and miracles can happen."

ETHAR EL-KATATNEY

Sudanese youth favour Western-style clothing

He adds that the goal of the Youth Program is to "bring in youths so we can build them up and send them out" to connect with other youths and show them there is somewhere else to belong.

Dena Nicolai, originally from Edmonton, is currently working and volunteering in Cairo, Egypt. To learn more about Refuge Egypt or to donate to their work, visit www.refuge-egypt.org.

The Sudanese in Egypt

A peace agreement in 2005 between the Sudanese government and rebels in Sudan resulted in a curtailing of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees's (UNHCR) refugee screening program. Following this truce, the Egyptian government began sending many Sudanese back to Sudan, telling them it was now safe to return. Despite this, according to the UNHCR, there are over one million Sudanese living in Egypt, though other estimations put it closer to two and as high as four million. Of this number, only about 23,000 have legal refugee status, while the other hundreds of thousands must struggle along without the assistance of the UNHCR.

Many Sudanese arrived in Cairo expecting official refugee status and eventual resettlement in a Western country. This is unlikely for those not granted status prior to 2005. Although the 2004 "Four Freedoms Agreement" between Sudan and Egypt grants Sudanese the legal right to movement, residence, ownership and work within Egypt, most Sudanese know this policy means almost nothing. Dark-skinned and clearly foreigners, they often face intense racism in Egyptian society. They are seen as outsiders, and further competition for already scarce jobs and resources. Sudanese children have limited access to Egyptian schools, and instead must attend unaccredited church-run institutions if they have any hope of an education.

Leaders . . . continued from page 1

North of the border, Prime Minister Stephen Harper feels a similar burden. Harper does not, however, enjoy the same popular support as Obama. Having just escaped being defeated by a possible coalition government in December, Harper is walking a dangerous line between sacrificing fiscal conservatism and losing public support. Add to this the difficulty of justifying an overseas conflict that is steadily losing support in Canada, a publicized spat with former PM Brian Mulroney, and a dying manufacturing sector, and Mr. Harper's job description does not sound very enticing at the moment.

Contrary constituents

Canadians have become increasingly fickle, eager to make up their minds based on whatever the latest political posturing or gossip produces. Canadian politics is apparently no longer about pragmatic, logical support of the party and leader best suited to rule the nation; rather, it is a popularity contest that sways and changes with the slightest breeze.

Canadian politicians deserve a general public that demonstrates some sort of long-term thinking. Recessions are easy times to be critical, especially from the comfort of our living rooms. Negativity is not, however, what Canada needs right now. Projecting that negativity onto our leaders and politicians is needed even less.

In these times, Canadians certainly deserve competent leadership. We deserve fiscal responsibility, transparency, honesty and strength. In return, however, let's try to curb our criticism and show a bit more support, because the ability to proficiently lead your constituency – whether it is a family, a workplace, or a political state – through tough times is truly a gift.

Brendan Kooy is an Ontario representative for the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC). He currently resides in Chatham, Ontario.

News

Adventures in California: water, water, water

Nathan Stevens

During a recent trip to California with the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program, there was one topic that was of greater concern than any other: water. For farmers in the San Joachim Valley, the need for water is critical for their success. Of course, water is important to every farmer, but especially for those growing in a desert. A prolonged drought will have major implications for California and for other competing jurisdictions, including Ontario.

While our group was visiting the Sunshine state, governor Schwarzenegger declared a state of emergency regarding water supplies. This was soon followed by a declaration that the Central Valley Project would be providing no water to California farmers south of the delta and only five percent to farmers north of the delta. This will have a major impact on many farms and thousands of farm workers.

California has a complex water distribution system. The state is very wet in the north and in the mountains, while it is very dry in the southern valleys where the majority of agricultural activity occurs. The federal Central Valley Water Project and the State Water Project supply many farmers with their water needs. Farmers pay for the water they take in quantities known as "Acre-feet" or the amount of water required to cover one acre, or over 271,000 imperial gallons. Most crops require between two and a half and four acre-feet.

Water, water, water *cont. on p. 7*

A synagogue visit

I donned a yarmulke as I stepped into the local Orthodox Jewish synagogue last Sabbath – a small brick building called "Beth Isaiah" in Guelph. Theologican Jurgen Moltmann said Christianity is basically (messianic) Judaism for the Gentile nations, and I thought I ought to investigate.

This was the scene: men in shawls gathering for three hours Saturday morning to chant, pray and read Hebrew scripture.

It was like stepping into a play in which I did not know my lines. They follow a special liturgical book which begins at the back cover and moves towards the front – one page Hebrew, one page English. The general tone is a beautiful string of sounds like "Hashanah Hashem Adonai hallel kiddosh." Thankfully, most people were very gracious in explaining to me what was going on.

The height of the service was when curtains covered by menorah symbols at the front were parted, and a decorated Torah scroll was paraded through the sanctuary. Everyone touched the scroll and then kissed their hand. It was an impressive display of respect.

I was told that the scroll was all hand-written and absolutely flawless. If a scribe makes even one small mistake on a scroll the entire scroll is tossed out. Final value: $50,000. If the scroll is ever dropped the one who fumbled it is obligated to a 40 day fast.

Praise with all your bones

There is much to elaborate on with regards to this visit, but I'll mention just three impressions: the integration of the body, the separation of genders, and the inescapable sense of vulnerability.

First of all, these Jews worshipped with their whole body. Not only were the men dressed in shawls and fingering their tassels regularly, but there was a significant amount of moving up and down from the front and an even more frequent amount of rocking back and forth on the feet.

I looked on the English page in the worship book, and there were all kinds of instructions that went with the reading, including: "bend at knee, bow, then straighten up"; "keep your legs together for the following"; "take three steps forward, rise to your toes"; and "turn to the right as your recite this in one breath."

I was told that this is because of various laws in the Torah, but also because there is a saying: "Praise him with all of your bones." Christians could certainly learn something here from their spiritual ancestors.

Eternal Student

Peter Schuurman

But women are divine

As a second observation, I noticed that women did not do any readings or prayers. In some Orthodox Jewish synagogues, the seating is even segregated by gender.

When I asked about this I was told that women were so naturally spiritually attuned to God that they were not even required to attend synagogue. "Someone has to take care of the family at home," they said, and "women are the more obvious choice for child care."

When I inquired further, they explained how the Scriptures (eg. Genesis) show that men are more wild and crude and in need of domestication. After all, "Adam" does mean "ground" or "dirt."

Women, as descendants of Eve (literally "life") do not need the same disciplines of synagogue attendance, reading and memorization of the law.

This may sound reasonable to you or rather like discrimination disguised as clever flattery, depending on your understanding of gender roles.

A legacy of suffering

Finally, the signs of vulnerability were plentiful. The prayer book was dedicated to the memory of R'Chaim Wolf, a devout Jew who left three children and a wife in Poland to die saying his prayers in the labour camps of Siberia. The "sermon" at the end of the morning was mostly about how brave the Hebrews were in Egypt to sacrifice an animal sacred to the Egyptians – a lamb – and then to walk out towards the sea and desert. "Take courage and remember you a Jews!" said the Rabbi, as he recounted slavery, exile, Hellenization, and Muslim imperialism, and dropped one-word clues like Hamas, Yemen, and Russia.

"Everyone wants to assimilate us by either force or honey," he said. "We must not forget we are Jews; we must teach this to our children this Passover…. Our people are suffering all over the globe. Remember, the greatest mitzvah (command) of all is to redeem one who is caught in captivity."

The sense of being an endangered people was heightened by the small crowd of mostly the older generation. The service ended, and after some wine downstairs, people dispersed. They were very kind to me, and I felt another spiritual thread was drawn between me and this fragile, foundational race.

Peter Schuurman lives in Guelph, Ontario, where he parents his two children, Joseph and Petra. He is also part-time faculty at Redeemer Unviersity College, where he teaches World Religions.

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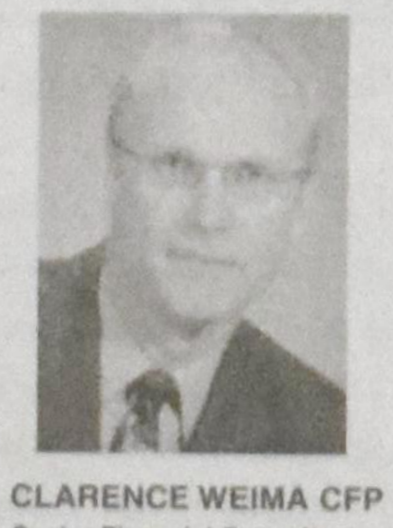

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Editorials

The curbside prophets prepare a way

Brett Alan Dewing

I was recently driving up the QEW from St. Catharines to Hamilton. It was a beautiful spring day, and I was on my way to dear friends' for supper. All seemed peaceful and right. Until I started seeing them.

It started as I drove under an overpass. A fire truck caught my eye, then a small Canadian flag. As I looked, I saw the entire bridge above me was full of people, intently staring North. Strange," I thought and drove on.

Before long, I had passed under another overpass bursting with citizens and fire trucks. Again, small flags were dotted here and there, and again, they all stood watching the North.

Suddenly, I passed a stopped car. Its driver was standing on the side of the highway, staring – you got it, North. And then I passed another stopped car and another. On hills beside the road, straight lines of people stood silently watching...something.

A happening

I began to become unnerved. Surely this was not some obscure Canadian holiday. I tried to remember the date and if it had any resonance. I couldn't think of anything that might be celebrated at the end of March. But surely the flags in evidence held some clue to the meaning of this vigil.

As I passed larger and larger numbers of abandoned cars, scenes from horror movies started to flip through my mind – or rather, scenes of what I imagined horror movies were like, as I'm too squeamish to watch them myself, thus adding to the dreadful mystery.

Why had all these seemingly normal people pulled their cars off to the side of the QEW? Why was every bridge and overpass full of patriotic citizenry? Why, oh why, were they all so intently focused on the North?

Theories

I began to try making sense of the phenomenon. Perhaps one person had started by silently taking up their post and one by one others had joined in, searching for whatever the rest might be seeing.

Then again, I thought, maybe this is some Canadian conservation day when people are urged to not drive their polluting vehicles. Perhaps I, too, should pull off.

The more silent sentinels I passed, the more unstrung I became. It was as if they were all watching an invisible mushroom cloud consume Toronto. Had something of the sort occurred? Had there been an attack, prompting this impromptu memorial? Was the nefarious really afoot?

I called my friends in Hamilton, asking if there had been an occurrence or a holiday. They assured me, in the tones one uses when addressing the insane, that nothing was wrong and no holiday had been declared. The news did not exactly reassure me. Something was obviously happening. Maybe it hadn't reached Hamilton yet?

Clues

As I drove, more and more slowly, through the Twilight Zone of the QEW, the stopped cars and lines of watchers multiplied. I was on the verge of pulling over myself when I got my first clue as to the situation.

The Niagara-bound lane had completely emptied out. It stretched beside me like Cormac McCarthy's *Road*, and I blindly drove toward whatever had emptied it. It was then that a police motorcycle drove past, going South. Another followed, and another. And yet, they were obviously not pursuing or fleeing. They were driving almost solemnly.

And then it came into view. A long black hearse passed in the South-bound lane, followed by more police vehicles. After it had gone, the crowds dispersed, and the road regained a veneer of normality.

Honour

I have now decided that what I witnessed that day was a homecoming – a soldier, or a soldier's remains, was on its way home.

With this key to unlock the experience, my anxiety and fear turned to bittersweet respect. Had all of that, all of those motorists pulling aside, all those miles of silent people, been to honour the sacrifice of a soldier?

I have lived in the United States, one of the most fiercely patriotic countries in the world, for most of my life, and yet I have never seen so touching a scene. I have never seen ordinary people spontaneously pull over their busy lives to show respect and solidarity for a man or woman who cannot know they are there.

And they say that Canadians have no national identity. I have seen it. It is the lines of people on the side of the road, silently marking a homecoming. It is a vision of the future for those of us who look forward to a great Homecoming of our own some day. It is the cloud of witnesses, silently watching an invisible cataclysm in a nation's heart.

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EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF

Op-Ed Editor: Bert Witvoet **bert.witvoet@sympatico.ca**
News Editor: Angela Reitsma Bick **angela@christiancourier.ca**
Feature Editor: Brett Alan Dewing **brett@christiancourier.ca**
Circulation/Fam.ads: Rose der Nederlanden **rose@christiancourier.ca**
Admin/Bus.ads/Web: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer **ads@christiancourier.ca**

Church Page Editor: Marion Van Til ***marianvantil@roadrunner.com***
Contributing Editor: Peter Schuurman ***eternalstudent@sympatico.ca***

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5 Joanna Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1
Tel: (905) 682-8311; 1-800-969-4838
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Conversations with the unemployed

Angela Reitsma Bick

In Jane Austen's well-loved novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet must each overcome a measure of vanity and a set of preconceptions before their love can take root. Lately, I've been thinking about the stubborn pride and unshakeable prejudices that we hold regarding money – particularly its acquisition. During a recession, we may be holding our financial cards even closer to our chests, reluctant to discuss particulars. With unemployment statistics recently reaching 8 per cent in Canada and 8.5 per cent in the States, however, chances are that you know someone out of work. Use this handy guide as a reference for how to interact with the fastest growing demographic in North America today.

What not to say

By his own admission, Austen's protagonist has a hard time with small talk. "'I certainly have not the talent which some people possess,' said Darcy, 'of conversing easily with those I have never seen before. I cannot catch their tone of conversation, or appear interested in their concerns, as I often see done.'"

If polite chitchat with gainfully employed acquaintances is already difficult for you, it's going to be even more awkward to converse after church with a newly-jobless friend.

For starters, don't act like everything is fine. The unemployed person may not want to discuss particulars – leave that up to him or her – but a brief acknowledgement of the situation would probably be appreciated. Some people identify so strongly with their occupation that its loss is almost like an inexplicable death in the family.

Admittedly, it can be hard to find the right words. Phrases such as "it's all for the best," however, can sound patronizing. I have an equally strong dislike to the platitude about God's intention, now that he's shut this door, of opening a window soon. Maybe I loved that door! Maybe I don't relish the hassle of coming and going by any other means. Let me mourn the old door for a moment before recognizing the outlines of an entirely new threshold.

Think carefully before deciding to reminisce about how you, or your wife's sister, or your neighbour's cousin's mailman's mom lost *her* job twenty years ago and it made her a better person in the end. This is along the lines of "it will all work out," which – although as a Christian I believe to be eschatologically true – may not help. Things don't always work out in this earthly life, and perpetrating the belief that they do turns many people off.

Instead, a time of unemployment and uncertainty may be a chance to strengthen one's faith. When the apostle Paul writes of the hardship he bore in Asia, he says that "this happened that we might not rely on ourselves, but on God" (II Cor. 1:9). This insight may need to be discovered individually and in retrospect.

What you can say

Although whipping out your cheque-book may not be appropriate, you can still show your support. Rather than assuming you know what is needed, try simply asking, "How can I help?" A meal, a visit, a ride, a listening ear, a contact or some advice may be appreciated in turn. Be conscious of the family members affected by this situation, and whether the unemployed person was the sole breadwinner or not. As an individual, you may not be able to help, but the church can. It's a good time for those of us still working to keep our eyes open for friends and neighbours who may be hurting privately.

It's also useful just to empathize and leave it at that. Something like "that's rough" will probably align more closely with how the jobless one is feeling than "try to look on the bright side." Paul does remind us to "Rejoice with those who rejoice" (Rom.12), and if a new job opportunity arises, there may be a chance for that in a few months. For now, however, leave space to lament a little.

After a bit of time passes, try a simple "How are you doing?" Nothing fancy, nothing false. Just keep caring and showing that you care. After all, the newly-jobless people you know are no different from your fully-employed friends.

I find myself, like Darcy, retreating behind the excuse that I don't know what to say in awkward situations. The indefatigable Elizabeth, however, doesn't let us get away with this.

"'My fingers,' said Elizabeth, 'do not move over [the piano] in the masterly manner which I see so many women's do. They have not the same force or rapidity, and do not produce the same expression. But then I have always supposed it to be my own fault – because I would not take the trouble of practising.'"

Letters

Putting the Israeli conflict into perspective

I had the opportunity to spend 10 days in Israel last November. Being there I heard and saw things that I did not know, because of the one-sided reports of our media.

To understand how it all got started, we have to go back to the time when Palestine was supervised by the British. At that time, Palestine was occupied by Arabic Muslims, Arabic Christians and Jewish people. They lived together in relative peace for hundreds of years.

This situation changed after the war, when Jews immigrated in great numbers to Palestine, and under the leadership of the secular Zionist movement persuaded the English government to favour the Jewish immigrants over the Arabs living in Palestine.

Although the British mandate stated that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine," that is not the way Zionists think. Let me give you some examples. The late professor Israel Sharak of Hebrew university says that "You can not have humane Zionism; it is a contradiction of terms." David Ben-Gurion stated, "After we become strong, as the result of the creation of a Jewish state, we shall abolish partition and expand to the whole of Israel." That is the policy of Zionism up to this very day.

Current Jewish governments try to reach their goals by creating new settlements in Palestinian territory, by turning off the water supply in certain communities, and by preventing garbage pick-up and cutting off electricity to the Palestinians. In other words, they are trying to destroy Palestinian infrastructure. Besides that, Palestinians can not freely travel in their own territories without passes, which can be cancelled at any time. Jews have occupied the Palestinian Territories, just like the Germans did during the war in Holland, and similar atrocities are being committed.

I am not condoning the actions of the Palestinians; terrorism has the wrong results. They are, however, acting out of desperation, just like we did during the war in the Netherlands. If the Jews had followed the advice of the King of England, mentioned earlier, instead of the policies of the Zionists, things would look different today.

W. van Oene,
St. Thomas, Ontario

Leaders should discourage gun ownership

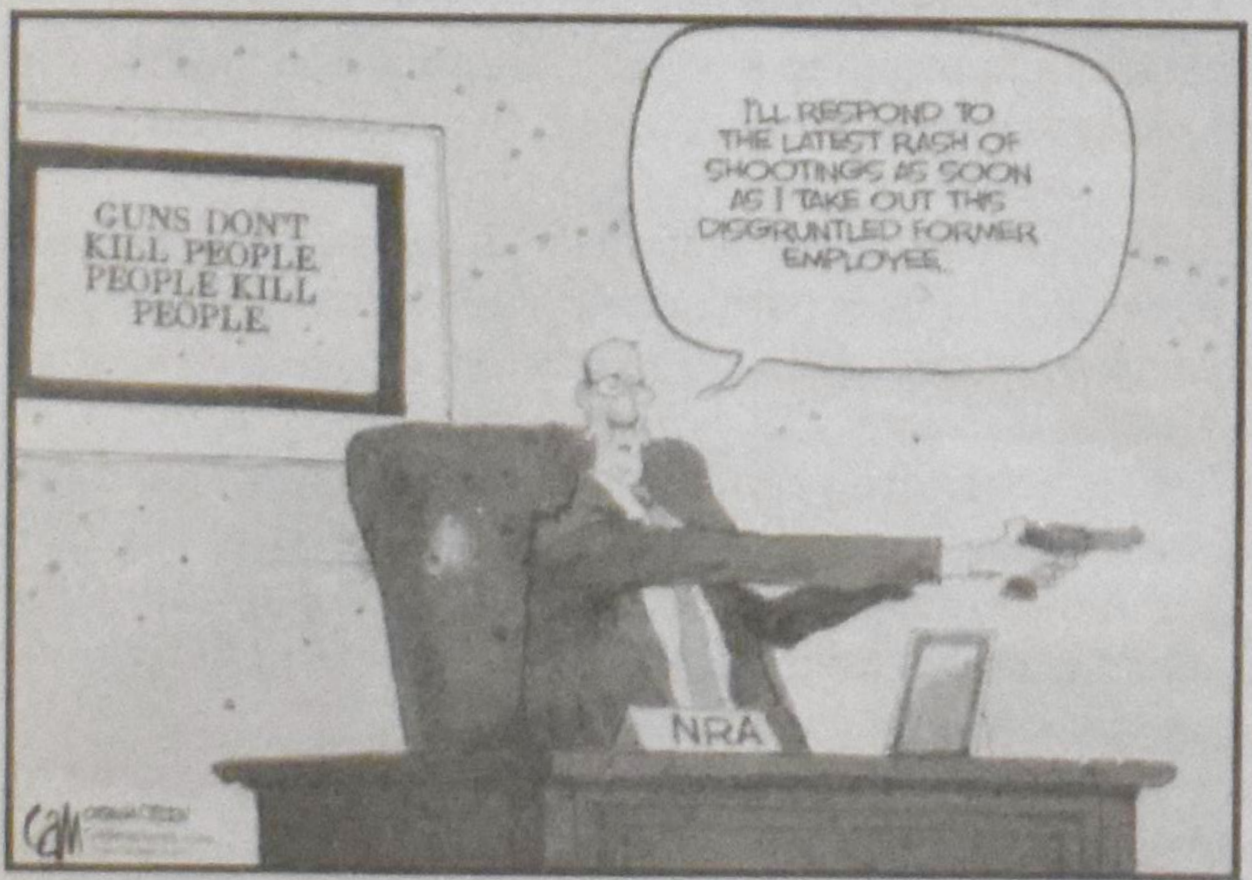
Some time ago my son-in-law was asked by an American visiting Canada, "What do you feel is a major difference between living in the U.S. and Canada?" His response: "In Canada I have much less worry that my neighbours have guns."

According to the media, the Conservative party will soon take another run at the gun registry. I realize that the issue of registry and its effectiveness is nuanced. But it is symbolic of a much more important question: should civilian ownership of guns be widespread, easy and encouraged or should it be rare and discouraged?

The big picture is that there is hardly any social good in widespread gun ownership and VERY few Canadian civilians (some First Nations, hunters and farmers) legitimately need guns.

The harm done by guns far outweighs the good. Particularly in challenging economic times like this, if social unrest rises it is far more dangerous when large numbers of guns are floating around in society. Many gun advocates want guns exactly because they mistrust the government, which is especially scary. In places like Mexico and many other war-ravaged countries, the widespread presence of guns makes it difficult or impossible for the government to maintain civil society. That is the background of my son-in-law's comment.

Consequently, I am deeply worried about the Conservative party's encouragement of gun ownership. I think that the long term goal should be the near elimination of guns in the hands of the general population. While that may sound like a radically impossible idea, we should take beginning steps in that direction. Unfortunately, we are now moving in the opposite direction: as gun ownership increases, more and more citizens opt for the false security of acquiring guns because their neighbours have them and they feel the need to defend themselves. We trust the government less and less to implement justice, and instead take it into our own hands. So, though we are still a long way from the anarchy of places like Somalia, Iraq or other highly armed countries, we are edging toward anarchy and the rule of guns rather than the rule of law. That sounds far-fetched, but we already have a whiff of it in places like Vancouver and Toronto where organized crime uses guns to implement the beginnings of an alternate system of governance and "justice." That whiff becomes stronger in the U.S. and very strong in Mexico.



But even if fears of anarchy are only paranoia, the fact of thousands of North American gun deaths each year should lead us in the opposite direction of a "made in USA" gun policy.

Syl Gerritsma
St. Catharines, Ontario

Editor's note: This letter was originally sent to a member of Parliament. It has been edited for CC.

What do *you* think?

You can blog, Twitter, Facebook or write your own Wikipedia entry, but here's a chance to have your name indelibly in print. We are collecting reader responses to the following question: How have economic changes affected your family, community and church, and how have you responded?

Please send your reply or any letter to the editor to **bert.witvoet@sympatico.ca**. We will publish your answer in our next issue.

The editors

A closer look at life in Cuba

I take exception to Brian Dijkema's article (April 13 *CC*), which appears to paint Fidel Castro and Robert Mugabe with the same brush. They are totally different. I have studied the Cuban revolution, read Castro's speeches and know first-hand that medical care and education are free, and that at any given time there are 23,000 Cuban doctors working in very poor countries at no charge. No-one is starving in Cuba. The infant mortality rate is lower in Havana than in Washington D.C. They are poor, but that is largely due to the blockade which worsened under George Bush.

For example, Cuba was importing soap from Mexico and because that Mexican company also exported to US, they were told that their business with US would terminate if they continued to do business with Cuba. So now Cuba cannot get the soap. Also, Cuba was getting pacemakers from Germany. One part of the pacemaker was made by the US. Germany would be cut off from getting the part if they continued to ship pacemakers to Cuba, so they stopped. Ships offloading in the US cannot then go to Cuba to offload. They would have to return first to their country (for example, back to Europe) and then go to Cuba. Nor can they go to Cuba first and then US. Since US does the greater amount of business, companies tend to comply with their rules.

Castro may not do everything right, but I applaud his resolve to never compromise education and health care no matter how difficult it has been economically. I will end with a section from the prelude of the book *A Hundred Hours with Fidel*:

"Amnesty International does not allege any cases of torture in Cuba, or 'disappearances', or the murder of journalists, or political assassinations, or protest marchers beaten by police. Nor has there ever been a popular uprising against the regime – not a single case in the Revolution's almost fifty years. The reports do show, however, that in some countries in the region that have stayed under the mass media's radar – Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, even Mexico, not to mention Colombia, for example – women, union members, government opponents, journalists, priests, judges, mayors and leaders of civilian society continue to be murdered with impunity, and without these violations of human rights arousing any international media attention at all, much less outrage.

To all this one must add that those countries, and most of the poor nations of the world, are afflicted by terrible ills: the constant violation of millions of citizens' economic, social and cultural rights; scandalous infant mortality rates; short life expectancies; hunger; illiteracy; homelessness; unemployment; lack of health care; desperate poverty that leads to begging, children living in the streets, and shantytowns; drug addiction and drug trafficking; crime rates; and all sorts of minor criminality ... **phenomena all but unknown in Cuba.**

Despite the unceasing harassment from abroad, this little country, clinging to its sovereignty, has achieved undeniably admirable results in the area of human development: the abolition of racism, the emancipation of women, the eradication of illiteracy, a drastic reduction in infant mortality rates, a higher level of general knowledge ... In questions of education, health, medical research and sports, Cuba has achieved results that many developed nations would envy."

Ineke Strayer Medcalf
St. Catharines, Ontario

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News

Why 10,000 Ugandans are eagerly serving in Iraq

Thousands of men and women from poverty-stricken Uganda risk their lives for $600 a month in Iraq.

Max Delany (CSM)

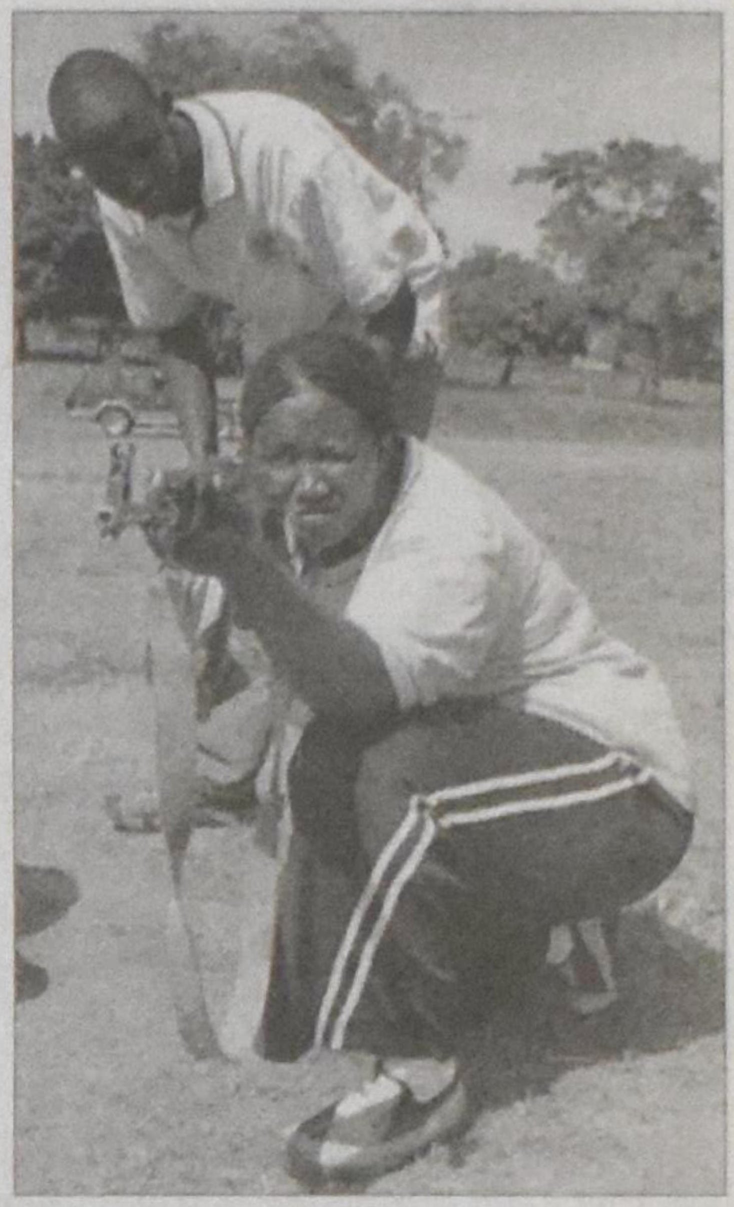
Kampala, Uganda – Under a relentless equatorial sun and the gaze of her Zimbabwean instructor, Juliet Kituye quickly reassembles her AK-47. Next to her, a young man in a ripped red T-shirt discharges imaginary rounds at an invisible target.

On a disused soccer pitch in the suburbs of the Ugandan capital, Kampala, 300 hopefuls are being put through rudimentary firearms training. Many of the recruits are raw and their drills occasionally lurch towards slapstick. One trainee lets the magazine slip out of his automatic rifle and onto the red earth, someone else about turns right instead of left. All of them share the same dream, however: going to Iraq.

As President Barack Obama announces plans to withdraw US troops from Iraq, thousands of young Ugandans are increasingly desperate to be sent to the war-torn country. Already, the Ugandan government says there are more than 10,000 men and women from this poverty-stricken East African nation working as private security guards in Iraq. Hired out to multibillion-dollar companies for hundreds of dollars a month, they risk their lives seeking fortunes protecting US Army bases, airports, and oil firms.

Soldiers for hire

The war in Iraq is the most privatized conflict in history. Since the invasion in 2003, the US Department of Defence has doled out contracts worth an estimated $100 billion to private firms. Increasingly, jobs such as catering, dry cleaning, and security have been outsourced to developing countries.



Looking for opportunity: Ugandan recruits hoping to work as private security guards in Iraq undergo basic firearms training in Kampala, Uganda.

It is clear why the US contractors came to Uganda. As an impoverished former British colony, the country is awash with unemployed and English-speaking potential recruits. Its government was an early member of President Bush's "coalition of the willing," and with a lingering 20-year insurgency, it also has a glut of experienced army veterans, who made up the initial contingent of Ugandans in Iraq.

More important, hiring Ugandans is cheap – about $600 per month is the minimum wage. That compares with the $15,000 that one industry insider estimated an American guard could make each month. Nevertheless, competition is fierce, and for those Ugandans who land a job, Iraq can prove a bonanza.

"The Iraq opportunity brings in about $90 million dollars, whereas our chief export, which is coffee, brings in around $60 or $70 million a year," says the former state minister for labour, employment, and industrial relations, Mwesigwa Rukutana, now minister of higher education. That figure is mostly made up of remittances.

Modern slave trade?

But domestic criticism has been fierce, with some equating the system to human trafficking or slavery. Reports of abuse, ranging from poor conditions and changeable contracts to sexual assault, have appeared in the media.

"Unlike in the past when there was the slave trade, no company comes here and recruits anyone against their wishes. It is willing worker, willing employer," Mr. Rukutana says. "If anyone thinks the conditions there are bad or that he is going to be exploited, no one is compelling him to go." Rukutana says that only one Ugandan has been killed in Iraq, while others say more have died.

If anyone understands some of the hardships of working in Iraq and the industry it's spawned, then it is Moses Matsiko. Mr. Matsiko has spent nearly four years working for a US firm in Afghanistan and Iraq. In late 2006, a convoy he was escorting through the town of Fallujah was ambushed. He was shot seven times but survived. Two American colleagues he was with were killed.

But far from shy away from the dangers of Iraq, Matsiko has embraced its opportunities. In 2007, he started his own company to train and send guards to Iraq and now has over 1,200 in the country.

"My experience in Iraq is that despite having been shot seven times, it is very great," he says. President Obama's withdrawal plans have cast a shadow of doubt over his future business plans. But that has just forced Matsiko to start looking opportunities elsewhere.

"If all goes well, then I hope to be sending people to Afghanistan in the near future," he smiles.

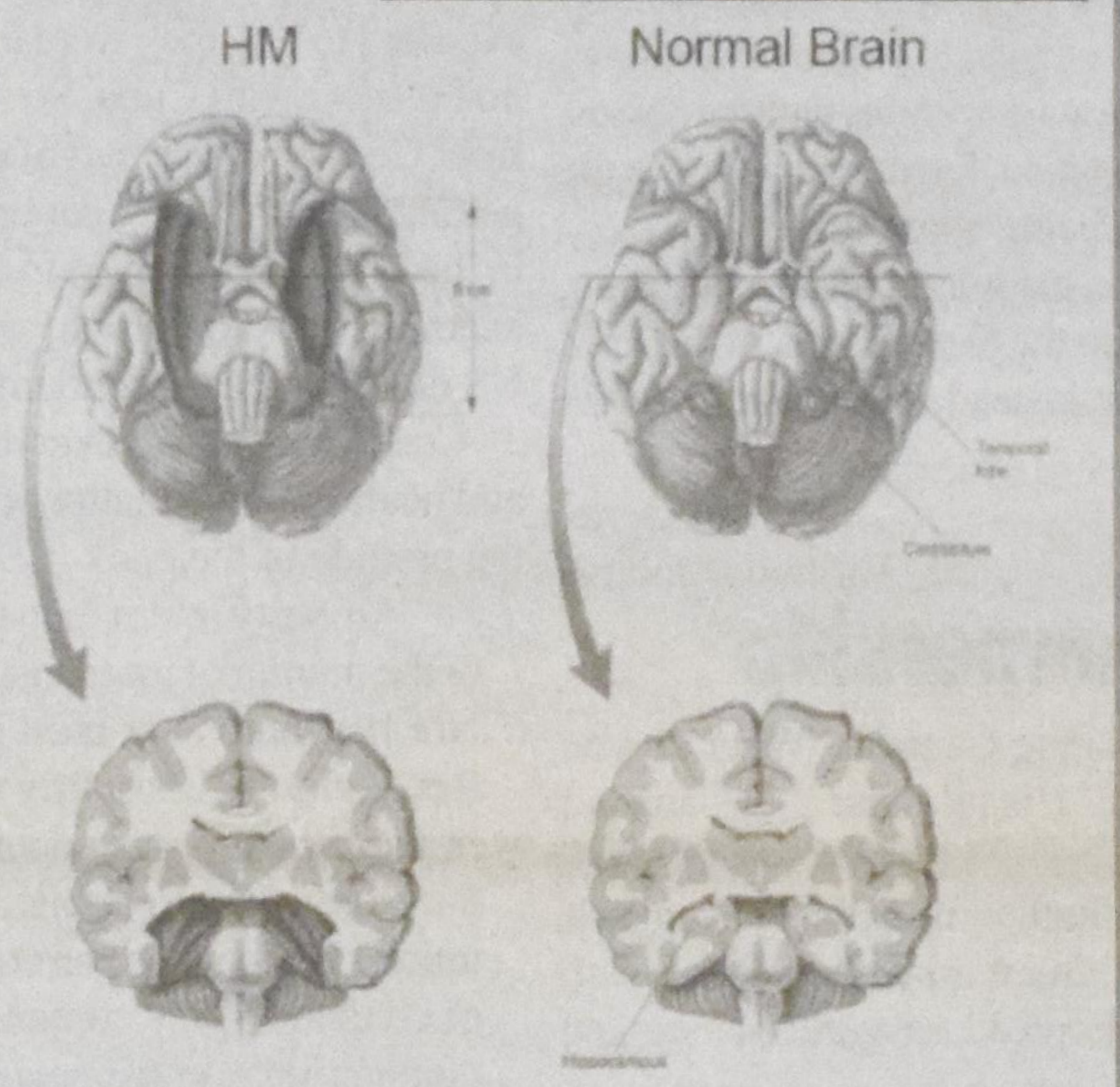
From the Lab
Rudy Eikelboom

H.M. has died

I never met H.M. If I had, he would not remember. I have, however, talked about H.M. each year for over twenty years of Introductory Psychology classes. It has been said that he is one of the most important human examples in psychology.

H.M., as he was known to the scientific community and generations of students, was actually Henry G. Molaison. He passed away the fifth of December 2008, so we no longer have to protect his identity by referring to him as H.M. He was an individual whose life radically changed our understanding of how the brain works.

In 1935, when he was nine, Henry Molaison had a bicycle accident and suffered brain damage leading to epileptic seizures (wear a helmet when you ride your bike). The seizures got progressively worse; by the time he was 27 years old, the only medical treatment available as a last resort was to surgically remove two parts of his brain, including parts of his hippocampus, a sea horse shaped structure in the brain's center. The surgery reduced his number of seizures but had an unexpected and unfortunate side effect that has helped scientists to better understand short-term and long-term memory.



Eternal youth

After the surgery Henry appeared to be fine: he was talkative, friendly, and apparently just as intelligent as before; he recognized his family and could remember all the details of his life up to the surgery. But it was soon discovered that his brain was unable to record new permanent memories. Not once did he ever recognize Dr. Brenda Milner, the McGill Neurological Institute researcher who worked with him for over fifty years. He lived continually as a 27-year-old in the year 1953. He recognized that his memory was bad but could not help but live with only 27 years of ever-more-distant memories. (The surgical procedure that Henry underwent is no longer used; newer treatments are available.)

H.M.'s case is important to science, as it demonstrated first of all that the recording or creation of memories is a different process from their storage and retrieval. H.M. could hold things in memory for short periods, longer if asked to rehearse the material, but once out-of-mind they were gone. But old memories remained. The ability to create long-term permanent memories had disappeared, and their creation is now known to require an intact hippocampus. In contrast, H.M.'s short-term memory, such as remembering a phone number to punch in, seemed intact.

Dr. Milner's interactions with H.M. also led to the recognition that procedural memory, like learning to ride a bike, is different from declarative memory for events and facts. Milner discovered that H.M. could learn to do tasks that are physically challenging and get better at them, just like a person without an injured brain. For example, H.M. was asked to draw, while looking in a mirror, a line between two borders that were in the shape of a five-pointed star (one a bit smaller than the other); using the mirror meant that he had to mentally reverse the figure, a difficult task for any of us. Over trials he got better, just like we would, but he never recognized the task he was doing as something he had done before. He is reported to have said, after mastering the task through repetition, "Huh, this was easier than I thought it would be."

An inadvertent legacy

An amazingly rich set of findings from one man's tragedy. Molaison's obituary in the *New York Times* concluded, "He died Dec. 2, 2008, of respiratory failure at a nursing home in Windsor Locks, Conn. He was 82 and left no family." No family, but a thankful scientific community.

I searched the web to see if Henry Molaison had a faith life, but it was silent on this question. People who worked with him say that he was a gracious man always willing to help the scientists who studied him; they indicate nothing about his spirituality.

Regardless of what Henry Molaison believed, I am convinced that he is now in the hands of our Lord, who is even more gracious and loving than Henry could ever be. And I want to thank the Lord for the richness and gifts that came out of this one man's sorrow. He had no choice, really, but in his life he taught us much about the brain God has given us. My prayer is that our Father in his kindness will now let Henry Molaison see, and remember, how his life as H.M. has blessed us all.

Rudy Eikelboom (reikelboom@wlu.ca) is associate professor of psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario

Columns

Moments of Ministry in Chaplaincy

Ecclesiastes 3: 1 - 11

Wars do not really cease when a peace treaty is signed or when one of the warring parties capitulates. War does not stop when the big guns go silent and when the smoke of cordite dissipates into the air. Combat does not come to an end when soldiers lay down their weapons. War goes on forever in the minds of those who experienced its violence and suffered its wounds. War goes on in this Veteran Hospital where old soldiers fade away. They relive time and again the horror and the terror of the battles they fought. In some cases, the awfulness becomes too much for the mind to harbour any longer, and it retreats into another world. A world where no one else can enter and where the veteran's mind creates its own reality.

In one of those hospitals the chaplain sat down with an old man who was fighting his war again. He sat in his chair, legs crossed and body shaking. Sweat dripped from his forehead and his arms stretched and swayed forward as if to ward off an approaching enemy. The chaplain gently massaged the veteran's back and spoke soothing words. The shaking lasted a long time, and when the veteran's body regained a certain posture of rest the chaplain began to read from his Bible: "He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth: he breaks the bow and shatters the spear…." Then he took the veteran's hand and softly prayed for peace. When he came to the end of his prayer the old soldier said "Amen."

Prayer

Prince of peace, Lord Jesus some of the fiercest fights are fought away from battlefields in the sphere of our private lives. Grant us peace from war with ourselves, our loved ones, our neighbours and our fellow believers.

Carl Tuyl

Flowers & Thistles

Curt Gesch

What to call a schwarm of redpolls?

My wife was reading the story of the ten plagues last week. I admit to daydreaming during the reading. Then I realized that I was looking at about 100-150 redpolls (small finches – birds! – not to be confused with Canadian Red Poll Cattle) that were on, around, over and beneath our front birdfeeder. "A plague of redpolls?" I thought.

Not really. But I did wonder if "flock" was the right word. There must be a collective noun for a "bunch" of redpolls. My neighbour suggested that in German we could call them a schwarm of redpolls, which made sense, but I was looking for something else, something more distinctive.

I couldn't find my book with lists of collective nouns for birds, so I was reduced to looking on the Internet. And I found that Juliana Berners was the brightest star in the firmament. She offers many lovely nouns: "a dissimulation of small birds," "a siege of bitterns," "a herd of cranes." Besides the still-common coveys of partridges and gaggles of geese, the good Dame Juliana (b. 1388?) also offers us a "chirm of goldfinches," an "exalting of larks," a "watch of nightingales," a "nye of pheasants," an "unkindness of ravens," a "host of sparrows," and a "murmuration of starlings."

Quite a few other inventive collective nouns have been used by English-speakers over the years. Here's a sample: a "wake of buzzards" [I love that one], a "charm of hummingbirds," an "ostentation of peacocks," a "scourge of starlings" [I agree], and a "pitying of turtledoves."

I also found some collective nouns that seem to be of current vintage, created, perhaps, with an ear to wit rather than lexicography: "an asylum of cuckoos," a "pantheon of godwits," a "quilt of eider," a "box of corn crakes." You get the idea.

Real Canadians

This left me with my common redpolls, hundreds and hundreds of them. I liked "dissimulation of redpolls" because it describes their madly wheeling, erratic flock flight, presumably a defence against hawks.

Perhaps a fancy name was just too out of character for a peasant-bird like the redpoll, which breeds in brush lands of the taiga and boreal regions; in winters in the tropics of southern Canada and the northern tier of the U.S.A. The redpoll never jets off to Acapulco or even Disney World, preferring to cheer up those of us who face -43 C. March weather with some disappointment.

Redpolls are real Canadians, feasting on spilled canola seed wherever it is grown. My avian correspondents report flocks of thousands near Gull Lake, Alberta, cheerfully feeding on spilled high-oil canola seed on the coldest days.

The huge redpoll flocks will not be with us for long. By the time this article is in print, they may have dispersed to breeding territories. But while they are here they need a name.

My Internet source suggests this, a "charm of finches." That sounds pretty good to me. Certainly no plague of redpolls is recorded in the Bible. "A charm of finches." Or just a "blessing of repolls." Either will do for me.

Curt Gesch is recovering from a hip resurfacing operation. He watches his redpolls eat genetically-modified canola seed knowing that Round-Up™ holds no fears for the wee birdies.

Water, water, water *. . . continued from page 3*

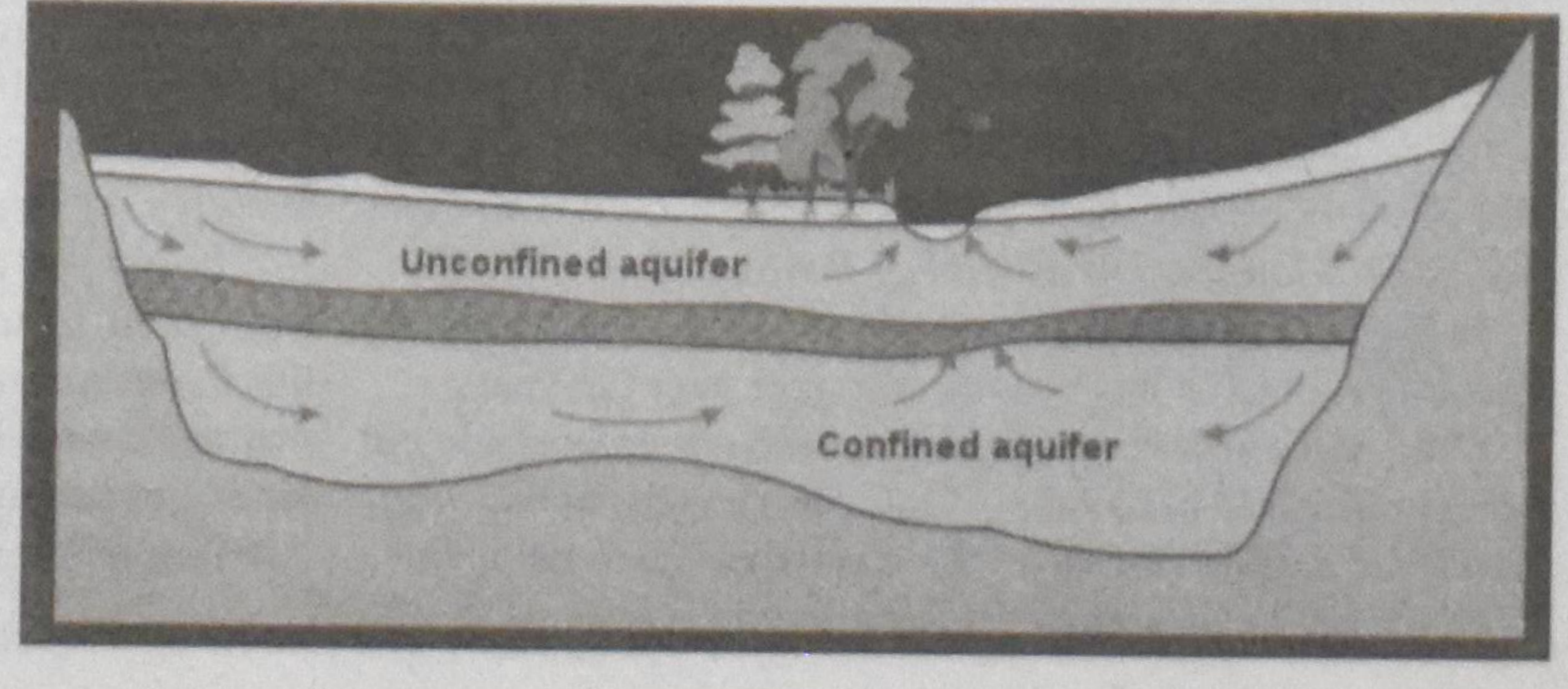
Many farmers also have deep wells, often over 2,000 feet in depth, that they can draw upon when they have a reduced allocation from the major projects. However, some of the aquifers are running at dangerously low levels. Farmers are facing the tough decision of whether to draw heavily on these aquifers this year, hoping for a wet year next year, or cutting back on production in the event that it is dry again next year.

Opportunity for Ontario

On top of these production challenges is the impact of the environmental movement on farm operations. The effort to save fish habitat has effectively put a stop to any additional water storage projects that would alleviate the pressure on farmers. From my outsider's perspective, this means that a great opportunity for a new water control project in a time of stimulus and infrastructure spending is going to be lost for California agriculture.

California is running low on its long-term water supplies. While it is the current leader in high value fruit, vegetable and nut production, a prolonged shortage will open up opportunities for other jurisdictions. With the right infrastructure support, Ontario may find itself in the position to fill a potential gap in production, supplying the Eastern seaboard with an increased amount of high value fruits and vegetables in the not too distant future.

Nathan Stevens is the Research and Policy Advisor for the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario.



Church

Catholic Church asked to revoke Luther's excommunication

ROME (Ekklesia) – An international expert on church unity has urged the Roman Catholic Church to declare officially that its excommunication of Martin Luther no longer applies.

Such a statement "in these ecumenically less exciting times ... would be a remarkable step and a sign of hope and encouragement," said Rev. Günther Gassmann, a German Lutheran theologian who was director of the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission from 1984 to 1995.

Born in 1483, Luther trained as a Catholic monk but was excommunicated by the Catholic Church in 1521 after refusing to retract teachings the church condemned as heretical.

In a lecture in Rome last month, Gassmann said that a joint Lutheran-Catholic statement published in 1983 to mark the 500th anniversary of Luther's birth had sought to elaborate a common position on the work and legacy of the reformer.

"Luther, a major symbol and personification during 400 years of the past Catholic-Lutheran conflict and division, is now seen as a common teacher," Gassmann noted, at the Centro Pro Unione, an ecumenical research centre in the Italian capital. Gassmann urged the Catholic Church to receive officially "this changed evaluation of Martin Luther."

Luther and his 95 theses: All is forgiven; well, almost all

Read Luther's hymns, commentaries

In 2008, the Vatican's top official for Christian unity, Cardinal Walter Kasper, encouraged Catholics to read Luther's hymns, which he declared were "full of spiritual power," and his commentaries on the Bible.

"One will then discover a Luther who is full of the power of faith, whom one cannot simply make Catholic, whom we find provoking and even alien in many respects, but from whom even Catholics can learn," said Kasper, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity since 2001.

Gassmann also presented an overview of the results of Catholic-Lutheran dialogue from 1965 to 2005. He praised the 1999 signing by the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation of a Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. It represented "an agreement concerning the most fundamental theological difference between Catholics and Lutherans at the time of the Reformation and ever since," said Gassmann.

Gassmann urged the Lutheran World Federation, a global grouping of Lutheran churches, and the Vatican's Christian Unity council to set up a special group to evaluate results of ongoing Catholic-Lutheran dialogue – including statements about the Eucharist – with a view to them being submitted for "official reception and affirmation." Gassmann believes "this would have an enormous impact on our churches. This would inspire ecumenical hope and confidence in our time."

German Christians to transmit the Bible via 'Twitter'

BERLIN – (ENI) German Christians are starting what they hope will be a record-breaking effort to use the Internet social-networking and micro-blogging service Twitter to try to "tweet" the Bible.

"We want with this action to encourage a debate about the Bible and to simultaneously show the modern possibilities that exist to receive and make known the Word of God," said Melanie Huber, portal manager of the Protestant Web site <www.evangelisch.de>, which launched the initiative.

Twitter (<www.twitter.com>) allows only 140 characters per message. The messages are called tweets and can be read by any Internet user on an open forum, or by subscribers if it is a closed service.

The project aims to publish the Bible in a shortened, micro-blog form on May 24, 2009, the final day of the biennial German Protestant Convention known as the Kirchentag ("Churches Day"). Kirchentag attracts tens of thousands of participants as well as political leaders from Germany and beyond.

Kirchentag organizers say they hope Christians will relate their favorite Bible passage in 140 characters.

Theologians are busy dividing the Bible into 3,000 sections that will need to be summarized as tweets. Volunteers will then distribute flyers to the expected tens of thousands of Kirchentag visitors, listing the Bible verses to be tweeted.

Organizers at <evangelisch.de> acknowledge that "tweeting" the Bible is a "complicated" undertaking.

The action will start at 6 p.m. on May 20, the first day of the Kirchentag, and end with the closing service. People interested in "tweeting" the Bible are invited to register now on <evangelisch.de>, which will be launched in September as a fully operational Protestant Web portal.

The portal is already using Twitter (<twitter.com/evangelisch_de>) to keep people informed of its progress.

Dutch church: It's ok for a minister to be an atheist

UTRECHT, Netherlands (ENI) – Two regional church authorities in the Netherlands have decided to take no disciplinary action against a self-proclaimed atheist minister, Klaas Hendrikse.

The decision of the authorities in the southern Dutch province of Zeeland was published in a letter to their congregations, the *Nederlands Dagblad* reported late last month.

The church authorities said disciplinary proceedings against Hendrikse, who is a minister in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, would be likely to lead to "a protracted discussion about the meanings of words that in the end will produce little clarity." The letter excused Hendrikse's stance saying that people have debated the issue of "God's existence" throughout time.

Hendrikse gained attention with his book (published Nov. 2007), in which he said that it was not necessary to believe in God's existence in order to believe in "God." The Dutch title of the book translates as *Believing in a God Who Does Not Exist: Manifesto of an Atheist Pastor.*

In his book, Hendrikse recounts how his conviction that God does not exist has become stronger over the years.

"The non-existence of God is for me not an obstacle but a precondition to believing in God. I am an atheist believer," Hendrikse says in the book. "God is for me not a being but a word for what can happen between people. Someone says to you, for example, 'I will not abandon you,' and then makes those words come true. It would be perfectly alright to call that [relationship] God."

No comment

Hendrikse has been a minister for more than 20 years in the southwestern town of Middelburg and a nearby village. His two congregations have belonged to the Protestant Church in the Netherlands since it was formed in 2004 as a union of a Lutheran church and two Reformed denominations. Hendrikse's congregations also belong to the Association of Liberal Protestants.

As each congregation belongs to a different church district, the issue of possible disciplinary proceedings was a matter for two regional church authorities. The national leadership of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands has in the past said that church law prevents it from initiating disciplinary measures against incumbent clergy. That task falls to the church's regional authorities.

The spokesperson of the national leadership of the Protestant Church, Jan-Gerd Heetderks, was quoted by the *Reformatorisch Dagblad* newspaper as saying that the national church leadership would wait until it had received the letter and had an opportunity to study it before making any comment.

"God is not a being but a word"

Church

'Quiet revival' going on in Vermont

Marian Van Til

BARRE, Vermont – A Southern Baptist pastor in Vermont says that evangelicalism, and especially the Southern Baptist Church, are "growing rapidly" in his adopted state.

That rapid growth is true, says Pastor Terry Dorsett, despite a January 2009 Gallup poll indicating that 58 per cent of Vermonters say "religion is not very important" in their lives. That same poll revealed that the Northeast had replaced the Northwest as the part of the U.S. least interested in religion, and Vermont as "the least religious state in America."

Dorsett moved to Vermont in 1993 to pastor a mission church which then had fewer than 40 worshipers on Sunday mornings in the village of Barre, which had less than 1000 residents. He had just left a church in Virginia of 900 members.

Dorsett likes to call the growth of evangelical churches "the quiet revival." The Green Mountain Baptist Association, which is the Southern Baptist affiliate in Vermont (and of which Dorsett is the director), reports that it has grown to 37 churches from 17 churches in the past eight years. Records indicate that in 1999 fewer than 600 people worshiped in a Vermont Southern Baptist church on a typical Sunday. In 2008 that number had grown to nearly 1900.

Dorsett explains, "Vermont was the last state to have a Southern Baptist presence, with the first church started in 1963. It took a long time for the fledgling movement to take hold in Vermont, but now it is one of the fastest growing evangelical groups in the state. The Evangelical Free, the Assemblies of God, and the Christian and Missionary Alliance are also experiencing growth. One Christian and Missionary Alliance church in the Burlington area regularly has over 1,000 people in worship on Sundays. While that may be normal in other parts of the country, it is unheard of in Vermont."

Losing battles, winning the war

Terry Dorsett

The Vermont legislature recently passed a law, to become effective Sept. 1, legalizing "gay marriage," notes Dorsett. Evangelicals (and most other Christians) naturally opposed it, he says, to no avail.

"There are times when those of us who are leaders in the evangelical Christian community become discouraged with the smallness of our numbers and the way that the mainstream liberal media marginalizes our efforts," Dorsett continues. "But then we are reminded that the battle is not fought in the courtrooms or in the statehouse, but in the hearts of men and women who are in need of Jesus.

"I have personally witnessed the spiritual transformation of several homosexuals who are now living free from that emotional addiction. They were drawn to one of our Southern Baptist churches because the people in that church showed concern for them. Though that congregation did not agree with the homosexual lifestyle, it did agree that everyone needs a chance to be transformed through faith in Christ."

Dorsett concludes, "Few people outside Vermont have any idea of how the church is growing in our small state. Even many Vermonters don't realize just how rapid the growth of evangelicalism is escalating. At only 1.8 per cent of population, evangelicals may indeed lose a few more battles before our numbers are enough that people begin to notice. But in the end, we'll win the spiritual war for the hearts and souls of our friends and neighbors, for we offer to them the only Hope that can change their lives."

The 'New Monastics' could be your neighbours

VANCOUVER (BCCN) – The doorbell rings and another man shuffles into the home on East Hastings Street in Vancouver. He is welcomed by name, and the chairs screech as more room is made at the dining table. There is always room for one more in this nightly ritual, a family meal complete with kids and laughter.

For the past two years, the Servants Vancouver community has made radical hospitality a central tenet of their lives together. Co-founder Nay Greenfield says, "There are plenty of service providers and soup kitchens here, and they do lots of good things. But people are longing for something deeper, more transformative, a place to belong, a family. So we welcome them into our lives and home as Jesus taught us."

Servants Vancouver is just one of a number of "intentional Christian communities" sprouting up all over North America in the last four or five years, often called "New Monastic" communities. The movement has been inspired by people such as WW II martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer and humanitarian Jean Vanier, and popularized by author Shane Claiborne.

Recognizing the growth of interest locally in New Monasticism, Grandview Calvary Baptist Church and the Carey Institute will host a May 2 workshop to bring together intentional Christian communities in Vancouver, church leaders and others interested in learning about how the movement can engage and refresh the church.

Calvin the focus of a Calvin College conference

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CCC) – Calvin College and Seminary paid tribute to its roots this month by hosting a conference devoted to the man after whom the college was named. Leading scholars on John Calvin and the Reformation gathered at the seminary April 16-18 to explore John Calvin's life and legacy. The conference, titled "John Calvin: Myth and Reality," marked the Reformer's 500th birthday, a little early. Calvin was born on July 10, 1509, in Noyon, France.

Hosted by the Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, the conference offered an opportunity to hear from experts on topics ranging from Calvin's theology to his impact on church discipline, from his reputation among his contemporaries to his influence around the world – including in Korea, Indonesia and early America. People from as far afield as Western Europe, India, Japan, and South Africa attended.

From predestination to Psalm singing

Noteworthy conference events included a panel on predestination featuring Calvin Theological Seminary professor Richard Muller, Calvin religion professor Laura Smit and Fuller Theological Seminary president Richard Mouw. The next night featured a special session on Calvin and music, including Psalms played on the organ and opportunities for everyone to sing.

Other conference topics included "The Good, the Bad and the Indifferent: Myths, Realities and Ambiguities in Calvin's Teaching about Women,"; "Respect for the Word: What Calvin and Wittgenstein had Against Images"; and "Calvin and the Social Order in Early America: Moral, Ideals and Required Variations."

John Calvin in his study

Several publishers made their works on Calvin and the Reformation available for purchase during the conference.

The Meeter Center event was among a number of conferences that are happening all over the world this year to mark Calvin's 500th birthday.

The H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, which opened in 1981, is a research centre specializing in John Calvin and Calvinism. It is located in Calvin College's Hekman Library. Today, the centre's rare items, books, articles, literature and bibliographies are acclaimed worldwide as one of the most extensive and user-friendly of all Calvin and Calvinism collections.

–editor's note– **Want the Canadian version?** Check out an upcoming festival called *Rediscovering Calvin: a celebration of history, theology, ministry, music and literature* at Emmanuel and Knox Colleges (University of Toronto). Featured speakers include Marilynne Robinson, Alister McGrath, Otto Selles and Calvin Seerveld (June 18-21, 2009).

Tony Blair to Pope: you're wrong on homosexuality

LONDON – (NOR) *The Times* of London has reported that former British prime minister Tony Blair has challenged what he calls the "entrenched" attitudes of Pope Benedict on homosexuality, and argues that the Pope should "rethink" his views.

Blair is himself a Catholic, having left the Church of England soon after leaving the prime minister's office in 2007. He now travels the world on behalf of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, which aims to promote understanding of the main religions.

Speaking to the magazine *Attitude*, whose audience is homosexual, the former prime minister said that he wants to urge religious figures everywhere to reinterpret their religious texts. Those texts should be seen then "as metaphorical, not literal," insisted Blair.

Asked about the Pope's stance, Blair blamed generational not theological differences and said, "We need an attitude of mind where rethinking and the concept of evolving attitudes becomes part of the discipline with which you approach your religious faith."

The Pope, who is 82, interprets Bible passages relating to homosexuality in the biblically orthodox manner and remains opposed to any relaxation of the Roman church's traditional stance on homosexuality. He has described homosexuality as a "tendency" towards an "intrinsic moral evil."

Jesus' purpose: to change tradition

In the interview Blair spoke of a "quiet revolution in thinking" and implied that he believed the Pope to be out of step with the public. "There are many good and great things the Catholic Church does, and there are many fantastic things this Pope stands for, but I think what is interesting is that if you went into any Catholic Church, particularly a well-attended one, on any Sunday here and did a poll of the congregation, you'd be surprised at how liberal-minded people were." The faith of ordinary Catholics is rarely found "in those types of entrenched attitudes," he asserted.

Blair also thinks that in Islam there will eventually be a change of heart, and that "people will find their way to a sensible reformation of attitudes." He continued, "What people often forget about, for example, Jesus or, indeed, the Prophet Muhammad, is that their whole *raison d'être* was to change the way that people thought traditionally."

While some converts to Rome become more conservative than those born to Roman Catholicism, the interview with *Attitude's* Johann Hari shows that Blair has allied himself firmly with the church's liberal wing.

Blair also claims that attitudes among evangelicals and evangelical Anglicans towards homosexuality are changing, despite the fact that the schism in the Anglican Communion worldwide is fundamentally about how to interpret Scripture on such issues such as homosexuality.

Blair thinks the shift he sees there is also a generational one. "If you talk to the older generation, yes, you will still get a lot of pushback, and parts of the Bible quoted, and so on. But if you look at the younger generation of evangelicals, this is increasingly for them something that they wish to be out of – at least in terms of having their position confined to being anti-gay."

Memoir

Drawn and quartered: Dina Babbitt's quest to free her heart from Auschwitz

Brett Alan Dewing

Dina Gottliebova was always an artist. Born in 1923 in Brno, Czechoslovakia, she began drawing at age three when her grandmother let her sketch on paper bags. She followed her passion into art school as a teenager and showed great promise when it all came crashing down.

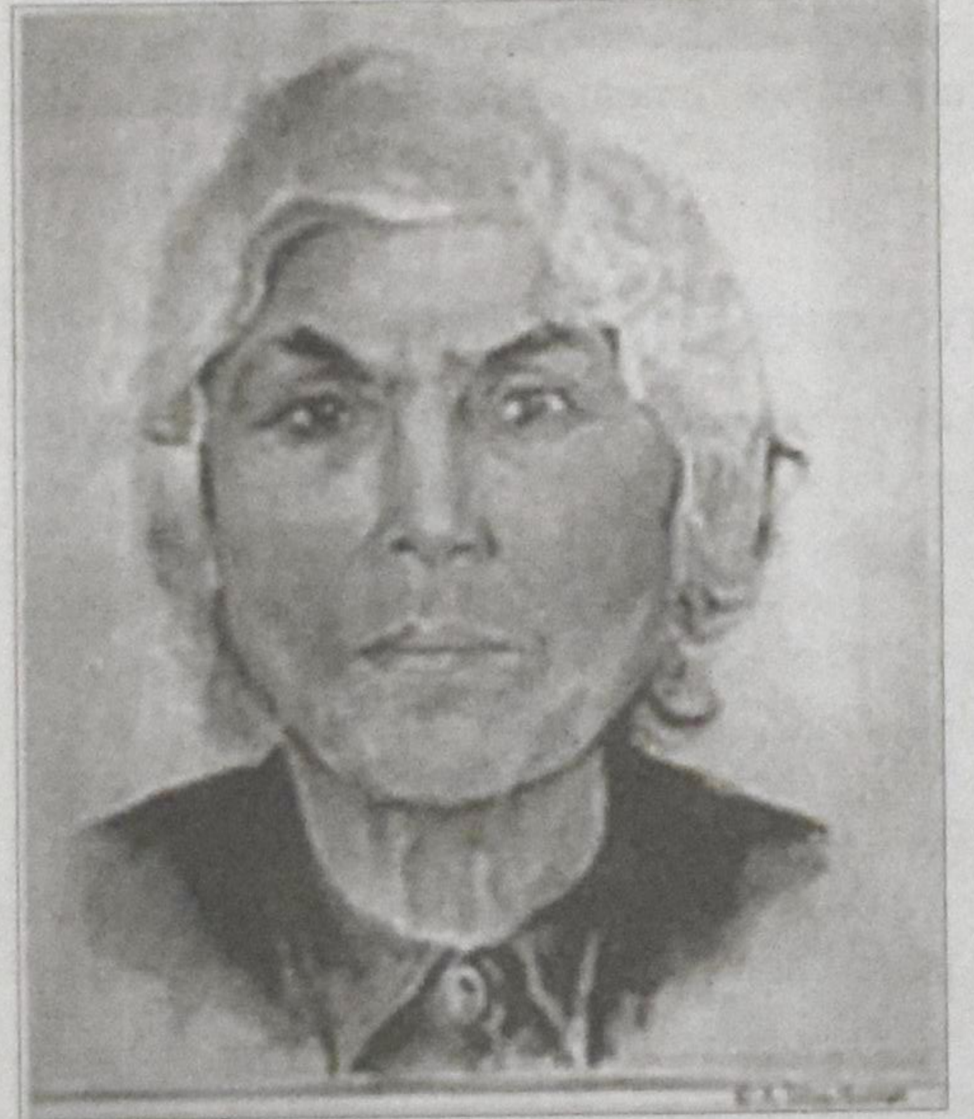
In 1942, Dina's mother was deported to the Nazi transit camp known as Theresienstadt to await transfer to Auschwitz. Fearing for her mother, Dina voluntarily accompanied her into the mouth of hell. It was her nineteenth birthday.

The two women were kept at Theresienstadt for two years before being sent to Auschwitz with five thousand other Jews.

Life amid death

There, Dina met an old acquaintance named Freddy Hirsch. Freddy worked in the children's barracks of the camp. Here, he watched over children as they waited for their turn in the gas chambers.

Knowing of Dina's artistic skill, Freddy smuggled her some paints and asked her to do a mural for the terrified children in his care. Though afraid of what might happen if she were discovered, Dina agreed. As the children watched, she painted a picture of Snow White and the Seven Dwarves, a film many of them had loved in their days of freedom. Dina's mural conjured those days again for the children of Auschwitz, and the painting evolved as the giddy children requested their own touches added.



Art arises from evil

As soon as the mural was completed, Dina's act of defiance was discovered, and an SS soldier took her from her barracks. Although she believed that she was on her way to a painful death, God smiled on her. Far from condemning her, Snow White had saved Dina's life.

The SS man drove her to the gypsy section of the camp, where she was introduced to the infamous Dr. Mengele. To aid in his cruel and torturous experiments, Mengele wished to accurately preserve the skin colour of the gypsies in the camp. In a feverish quest to prove Aryan superiority, he had been photographing the prisoners for evidence of their barbarism. Fed up with the primitive cameras of the time, he ordered Dina to paint realistic portraits of a handful of gypsy prisoners.

Dina with 'Gypsy'

For such a time as this

Despite the terror of being pressed into service by the camp's "Angel of Death," Dina used what power she had to do good. She threatened to kill herself, depriving Mengele of his artist, unless her mother were saved from scheduled "liquidation" of the Jews from Theresienstadt.

Mengele agreed to her terms, and when the five thousand men, women and children with whom they had arrived were killed, Dina and her mother were spared.

This was only the beginning of her torment, but it was also the beginning of her heroism. Over the next year, Dina was forced to paint the wretched of Auschwitz. She took her time, knowing that as long as a prisoner sat for her portrait they would not be killed.

As her talent became known, she was also called upon to paint the portraits of Mengele and other Nazi officers. She was even forced to depict the gruesome experiments of her evil captors.

In this way, Dina and her mother survived until the Soviet army neared Auschwitz and the Jews were evacuated. The two women lived through the death march to Ravensbruck, where they were liberated by the Allies in May of 1945.

A second shot at life

Dina started a new life in Prague as a free woman and a free artist. There, she fell in love with American cartoonist Arthur Babbitt, who had been an animator on Disney's *Snow White*! The two were married and moved to Hollywood. There, Dina's dream of being an artist was fulfilled. She and her husband worked as animators for Warner Brothers and MGM, lending their talents to the likes of Daffy Duck and Wile E. Coyote.

For seventeen years, the woman now named Dina Babbitt lived and worked alongside her husband doing what they both loved. She was still bringing joy to children through her art. And yet, the past would come back to haunt her in the cruelest way.

The last insult

In 1973, Dina was contacted by the Auschwitz State Museum, a Polish museum operating on the site of the former death camp. They told her that they had come into possession of seven of her paintings, depicting gypsies from the camp.

Dina flew to Poland to retrieve her portraits, thankful that something of beauty had survived the camp and eager to help the gypsies she had painted find a kind of freedom after their cruel deaths.

To her horror, Dina was informed that she could not take her paintings with her. After the resurrection of her paintings, this was too much. Knowing that her work was being held by the museum made Dina feel captive all over again. She cried, "It's like a part of my heart is still in Auschwitz."

She returned to the Auschwitz State Museum in 1997 with Katie Couric and the crew of America's "Today Show." Even this negative publicity could not persuade the museum officials to hand over Dina's paintings.

Again at another's mercy

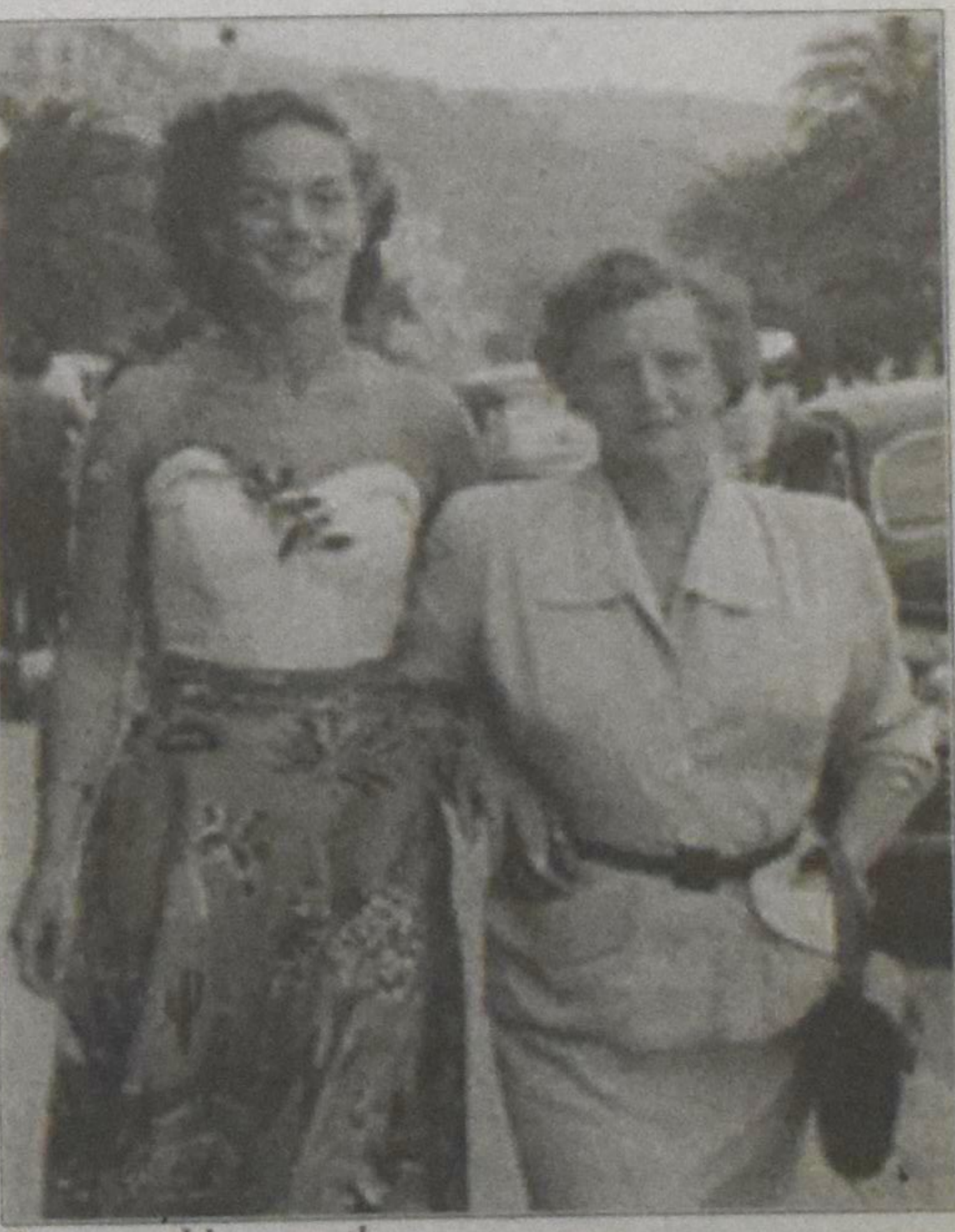
Dina's plight has sparked an international debate over the ownership of art. At one time, the museum claimed that Mengele was the true owner of the artwork. This has been refuted both legally and morally by numerous lawyers.

The museum's owners have also suggested that there is a moral obligation for Dina to leave her art on display. However, many of the paintings in the museum are exact replicas. These replicas can be retained without holding the originals. Dina does not intend, furthermore, to hide her work away but to use it to raise awareness in America, the land where she has found peace and freedom. She feels that the prisoners portrayed in her portraits will never be truly free or at peace until she can regain their images.

The United States House of Representatives has twice voted unanimously that the paintings done by Dina while at Auschwitz are her legal property and should be returned. Unfortunately, these decisions are not binding against the Polish government, which runs the Auschwitz State Museum, and they have been ignored.

"It's like a part of my heart is still in Auschwitz."

Now 85, Dina is battling aggressive cancer and wishes to see her work returned before she dies. To show your support, you may email the Babbitt family at michele@dinababbitt.com or the Auschwitz State Museum at muzeum@auschwitz.org.pl



Dina and her mother

The Auschwitz Museum's website describes their collection in this way:

"The art collection of the Museum has most of all pieces created secretly by prisoners of the concentration camp. This is an important document of tragic reality of the camp as well as a significant expression of feelings and experiences of their authors. In the Museum collections there are also a lot of post-war art created by prisoners which are important visual testimonies."

The melody of contradictions

The body that is sown is perishable,
it is raised imperishable;
it is sown in dishonour,
it is raised in glory;
it is sown in weakness,
it is raised in power.
I Cor. 15:42b, 43

A. A. VanRuler

Here Paul abandons his reasoning tone and changes to one of praise. After his apostolic declaration of the *reality* of the resurrection, and after warning about its *necessity* for faith and the Christian life, he tackled its *possibility* in view of human reasoning, beginning at verse 35. Immediately he displayed several images, such as the seed and the plant and the many kinds of bodies, to express this possibility.

But an apostle like him is not long held captive in such cold and strict reasoning. He is so focused on reality, and particularly on the reality of the glory he has seen and experienced in Christ, that he's no longer interested in *reasoning* about it. An apostle is, like everyone else, ignorant about how it is *possible*, but not at all about how *real* it is. In Christ's resurrection the great reality of our own resurrection has simply become evident.

Paul's song

Talking about this, the apostle begins a lyrical hymn. Because that's what it is, this beautiful piece with all its brilliant contrasts: a lyrical hymn of praise about the mystery of the resurrection. The apostle does not know how the resurrection is possible. And he actually does not know either what it exactly entails. It is one of the mysteries of the Christian faith, and one could even say the most important one. Now this mystery must be declared as such, and this is best done in that superior form of thinking and speaking which we call singing.

That is what Paul does here. It almost takes the form of a song. He expresses it in rhythmic contrasts, like a dance. *What is sown is perishable, what is raised imperishable; it is sown [*speiretai*] in dishonour; it is raised [egeiretai] in glory; sown in weakness, raised in power.* A natural body is sown while a spiritual body is raised.

In these words it is as if Paul, in the middle of his dispute with his thinking antagonists, begins to hum a song. He stands up, walks around the room and leans on the mantel. His thinking and reasoning doesn't help one bit, but he smiles about that. Thinking and reasoning isn't everything. The apostle chuckles a bit and hums away. Maybe his counterparts fall silent as well and they also begin to realize that the reality of the resurrection is a mystery – just as much as all the rest of life. And also that in order to participate in this reality one must listen to the gospel and sing one's confession.

Acknowledging death

From a viewpoint of style these contrasts are marvelous, but in our existence they are horrible. What is sown is perishable – that's the funeral. The cemetery is a farmer's field, a field of death. That is a typically Christian word. The human race is sown in the earth. All the leaves fall off the trees. Everything that lives is perishable and subject to perdition.

Death is not the only moment where we notice this. In the middle of our lives we are surrounded by death. At a thousand points our lives are threatened and nibbled at by death. Life is intrinsically perishable and surrendered to perdition.

The apostle feels this, just like all other people do. The Greeks suffered greatly on account of this. They attempted to flee from this thought by consoling themselves with the thought of the soul's immortality. Israel was never reconciled to this, and that is why, of all nations, it suffered most under the shadow of perishing.

Not only does mankind suffer from purely physical perishing. Worse yet are the dishonour and the shame to which one is surrendered. It seems that one is not a complete citizen in the empire of being. Sometimes we are jealous of a pebble, a little thing that has been in existence for a long time and will continue to live long after we have departed. We are there only for a little while. And why, actually? We must really continue to feel that this is a shame and not simply make peace with the fact that, after all, the leaves must all fall off the tree in autumn. If we acquiesce, we allow ourselves to become simply a part of nature and we dishonour the nobility of our being human.

Besides that shame there is also our fragility. Sowing is being done in weakness. Life is frail. When looking at technology and culture, we realize that a thinking human can achieve a great deal. But that is exactly what is so astonishing: our great potential is living in such a fragile vessel. When all is said and done, we are weak, as weak as leaves on the breath of the wind. In a moment we are here, and in a moment we are gone. In a moment we are smack in the middle of the energy of holiness, and then we give in to the temptation of sin. In a moment we sense the solid foundation of our faith, and the next, like a tree in a gale, we are shaken by doubt.

Perishing but becoming imperishable

All that affects the Lord God as well, Paul says. He would like his children to be different. Yes, he does sow them as perishable, and it is he who makes the world into a field of death, but he raises them as imperishable, in glory and in power.

We have no concept of this, no real good image. We have some inkling of it, especially when we feel the full reality of our "being-there". That kind of intimation becomes certainty when we see Christ in his life and above all in the state of his resurrection. But our conception is, and will remain forever, only partial. We ourselves have not yet passed through death, and we have not yet been raised.

However, we must not imagine the contrasts to be too great. It is not true that we are living purely on this side of death, completely subject to perishing, to dishonour, to weakness. There is the Holy Spirit as well, poured out upon us and indwelling us. There is the apostolic gospel about the resurrection of Christ. There is the confession of the Church that receives the gospel, that cherishes it and meditates upon it. There is the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. These form the immortal cure of our mortal nature.

By means of the sanctification of our hearts and lives our perishable nature is constantly being changed into an imperishable one. And dishonour is changed to honour. And weakness to strength. If we live by faith, Christ's power fills our lives more than Satan's.

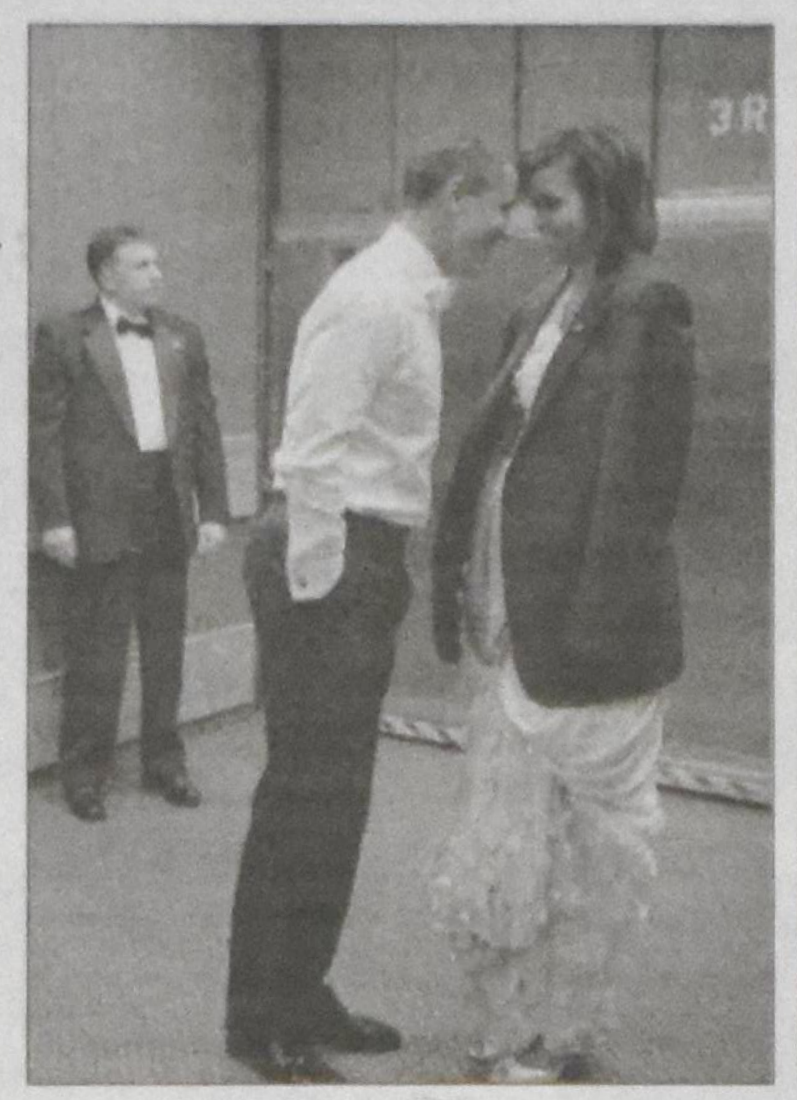
Translated by Bram Hoff of St. Catharines, Ont.

Column

Getting Unstuck
Arlene Van Hove

OBAMA…BACK TO RUNNING WITH THE COOL CROWD

"Have a look," I suggest to a friend as I pass three newspaper photos over to her. She frowns but can't help smiling as she looks at the first one of Obama grinning beguilingly at Malia and Sasha as he shares a thumbs-up moment with his two daughters. She keeps smiling, as she looks at the next the one of Obama gazing lustfully at his wife Michelle in an elevator after an evening celebrating his inauguration. But she sighs audibly when she comes to the third photo of Obama this time with the adorable Bo, the puppy he promised his daughters at the beginning of his campaign.



A good man found?

"Who says a 'good man is hard to find' eh?" I ask her referring to one of Flannery O'Conner's short story titles, "A Good Man is Hard to Find."

"What do you mean?" she asks.

"Obama is going to do it," I tell her.

"Do what?" she wonders.

"Making being dependable … cool! Something all women want in a man."

"Not sure about that," she can't help retort. "Being dependable equals being predictable equals being boring!"

"He may agree with that," I tell her.

"He would? So, what gives?" she asks.

"Apparently, when Obama was a student years ago and he decided to clean up his act and not get high anymore, he began concentrating on his studies, running three miles a day and fasting on Sundays. His roommate at the time became rather annoyed at this change of pace and told him "you're becoming a bore!" And, as Obama recalls in his memoir "Dreams from My Father," there was some truth to it. He became disciplined, responsible and predictable. Still, he admits, the criticism was a scathing indictment for someone used to running with the cool crowd."

No drama Obama

While boring may not be the first adjective that comes to mind when we see him going through the first months of his presidency, it was the "no drama Obama," who certainly impressed the nation with his steady composure as he went on to win the White House.

In this vein, Lauren Dzubow quotes Aubrey Immelman, associate professor of psychology at the College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University in Minnesota, who believes the variable that most distinguishes Obama from the two previous presidents is his conscientiousness – one of the 'big five' personality factors in standard psychology (everyone has five, in differing degrees; the others are: openness to experience, extroversion, agreeableness and the presence or lack of neuroticism).

Apparently, people who score high on the conscientiousness scale (as determined by several personality inventories) are dependable, orderly, self-disciplined, achievement oriented, cautious, industrious and deliberate – the type who could run an efficient political campaign, exercise daily, even while on the road, and make methodical decisions. (On the other hand, those who score low tend to be careless, irresponsible, disorganized and unreliable.)

Furthermore, a 2002 study from the journal *Assessment* suggests that when it comes to presidents, conscientiousness is associated with greatness: George Washington, Woodrow Wilson, Dwight Eisenhower and Harry Truman (all of whom historians rank among the country's foremost leaders) scored in the 90th percentile and above for the trait, based on inventories completed by biographical experts. Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln were also solidly conscientious (78th and 75th percentile); Bill Clinton and John F. Kennedy, however, came in at the 5th percentile.

Being conscious of the conscientious

My thinking at this point is: how about us regular folk? Where would a high rating on the conscientious scale get us? Brent Roberts, professor of psychology at the University of Illinois points out that being conscientious allows us to succeed more at work, enjoy stable marriages, have happier family lives and be more involved with our communities and most often (with a few exceptions) enjoy longer lives.

This, of course, begs the question, can we bottle or cultivate conscientiousness? And again, Roberts believes we can actively increase this trait over time. He suggests we begin by making small changes that focus on various aspects, such as discipline (exercising more regularly), responsibility (paying our bills on time), and organization (using a scheduling system). And, if we persevere with this plan, we may get on a roll and begin to reap the benefits from this life style and never look back.

So for all you "free spirits" out there, I only have one thing to say, "if you want to run with the cool crowd … try being boring!"

Arlene Van Hove (avanhove@shaw.ca) is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC.

Musicians celebrate outside First CRC Hamilton on Charlton Street

80th at First

Martha Turkstra-Tigchelaar

A full life

First Hamilton Christian Reformed Church is celebrating a special birthday! On April 16 this mother to six daughter congregations turned eighty years old.

One of its charter members, Martha Turkstra-Tigchelaar is still with us. She vividly remembers the humble beginnings with fourteen families huddling, first in the Labour Temple, and then in the little church on Main and Dundurn Streets, and eventually in 1949 moving to the present building on the corner of Charlton Ave and Hess St.

Most members arrived after WWII and for many, First Church in Hamilton was the initial contact with other Christian immigrants to Canada.

Literally thousands have moved through her membership files, and for several years every spare chair was used to accommodate the crowds at worship on Sundays. The space problem eased temporarily whenever a neighboring daughter church was established but again filled to beyond capacity several more times. Thus it happened that six daughter congregations were born.

But gradually immigration abated, and members moved to the suburbs. First Hamilton began to feel the decline, a phenomenon which is experienced by many city churches. But that was small comfort to this congregation.

By the early eighties there were many nostalgic comments similar to "Remember how full we always were?"

Having been a city church for over fifty years, there was an unease of her place in the community. The leadership realized that this congregation should be outgrowing its immigrant mode. Yet, what was that supposed to look like?

The membership decline became so drastic in the late eighties that a special meeting was held to actually discuss whether to stay in the city, move to the suburbs or even fold and encourage the members to join neighboring churches. There were so few left, and rumours abounded that "Downtown church" was dying.

Yet, to have no CRC presence in the downtown area seemed the wrong thing to do. "Lord, please show us what you have in mind and help us carry it out." When it came to a vote, 85 per cent voted to stay, with the decision to be more intentional about being a meaningful presence in the city. Thus "Downtown church" remained at Charlton and Hess.

New growth

And, indeed, God was working on a plan. But he uses his own timeframe.

Almost ten years later, Mike Goheen, a missiology professor at Redeemer University College, became minister of preaching at First. Mike also inspired his students to start attending there, and thus we gained an entirely new (and young, but also participating) audience.

In 2000, Andrew Zantingh became our pastor, and thus began a new era for this tired old lady called First Church. Much could be written about these past ten years, but suffice it to say that First received a new opportunity from its Lord and has to work with it. A second site was birthed in January of 2008 – New Hope – which meets in the east end of the city .

Change and new life is not without its growing pains – First Hamilton has experienced that more than once. But to know that God with his Spirit has moved this congregation to a more meaningful presence in the city of Hamilton and is willing in patience to continue to move her is an awesome wonder. And thus we celebrate this eightieth birthday with gratitude and conviction that we don't have to go it alone.

Martha Turkstra-Tigchelaar has been through her own ups and downs, including the death of her husband, whose story she has started to chronicle in his memory.

Rethinking young adult ministry

Brad Close and Jamie VanderBerg

This generation of young adults (aged 18-30) is leaving the church in droves. Some people travel off to college or university with no intention of seeking out a new faith community. And their journey through these formative years may not lead them back to the local church. Many churches and denominations are therefore left asking the question, "Where have our young adults gone, and how do we get them back?"

As we share some of the insights we've gleaned while serving as campus ministers at the Universities of Guelph and Dalhousie, we'd like to help the church rethink what ministry with young adults might look like in the 21st century. Though some recent statistics on the success of young adult ministry look bleak, we are confident that those statistics are *not* the end of the story.

Gleaning on Campus

Young adult ministry, as we've experienced it, is an active, intentional participation in the lives of people as they journey through the "odyssey years". In October 2007, David Brooks wrote an article in the *New York Times* by that title. Brooks describes the odyssey years as "the decade of wandering that frequently occurs between adolescence and adulthood." During this time young adults experience a profound sense of instability and anxiety. At the same time, they enjoy an extended period of identity exploration, unparalleled freedom, and an intense sense of possibility.

Though it's difficult to describe an entire generation, there are a few characteristics worth noting: Today's young adults delay many aspects of life, including moving out of their parents' house, marriage, long-term employment commitments, and church membership. This does *not* mean they're a bunch of self-absorbed anti-institutionalists. Today's young adults are socially connected, concerned about justice and human rights, and drawn to institutions that are making a tangible difference in the world. To those that are not, including some of our churches, the voices of young adults serve as a strong prophetic witness!

Jamie VanderBerg

The potential for young adult ministry

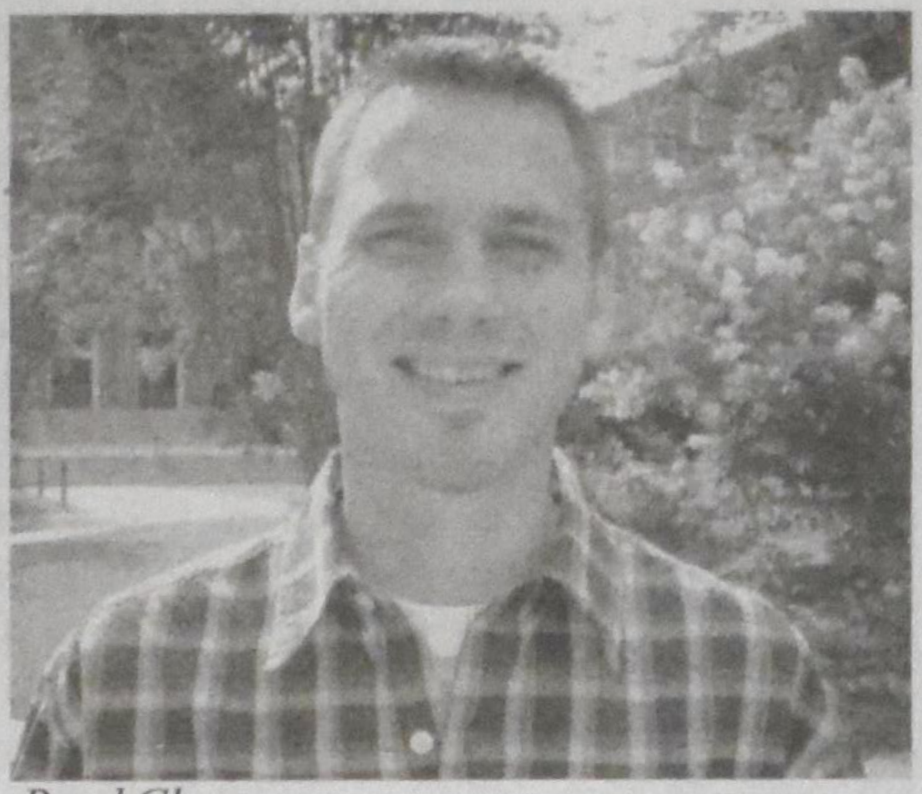
Young adult ministry is not a ministry *for* young adults but a ministry *with* them. On campus, the ministries that flourish are often those that are driven by the students. The more responsibility they are given, the more vibrant their witness and commitment becomes. As an example, the student leaders connected to Guelph Campus Ministry recently raised $100,000 for an AIDS clinic in Lesotho!

A common misperception of some churches is that we can best keep or attract young adults by providing a contemporary worship style, complete with a big sound and multimedia system. The young adults that we know are looking for community, even as their personalities draw them into different worship settings. Many young adults are looking for a *place* where they can *form* community. In such a place they are free to be their own person, to ask searching questions and to participate collectively in leadership, and they are taken seriously.

On Dalhousie's campus, students are forming community as they gather for thoughtful discussion, for prayer, and as they help serve those in Halifax who live in material poverty. Recently, two students have formed an on-campus group called "Students for the Streets." This is a student think-tank, dedicated to homelessness issues and community action. Students are provided with opportunities for service and with access to community representatives who work alongside people on the streets.

Campus ministry is a point of intersection for young adults. And this should come as no surprise, considering the current popularity of MySpace and Facebook. These online social networks are places for people to connect and participate in different communities at any given time. In a similar way, campus ministry is a place for students to connect and share a kingdom vision so they can better serve God in other communities, including student residences, student groups and student council arenas.

As the larger church seeks to minister *with* young adults, it would be helpful to view our congregations as points of intersection. Our churches should be places where people are fed by God's Word and sacraments and are challenged to actively discern



Brad Close

those *other* places to which the Holy Spirit is leading us. Those places may include Kairos, Oxfam, a local drop-in for street involved youth, or a local meeting focused on eradicating poverty *(see sidebar)*. How Reformed is that!

Recognizing the hope

Diagnosing the issue is a step toward renewed participation in the lives of young adults. And we see this ongoing dialogue as a trigger for hope. More than that, however, certain movements within the Reformed tradition are already well situated to minister with young adults.

For example, the Christian Reformed Church is situated on two-dozen university and college campuses across North America and is positioned to become a leader in dealing with the changing dynamics that young adults are facing. At the core of our campus ministry movement is a desire to develop lasting partnerships between the local church and the campus. This is the time to look ahead, to reinforce an old vision, and to develop new relationships.

So, as a teaser, we'll conclude by casting a vision: Imagine local church communities – intersections – that celebrate the redemptive work of every single member, including young adults. Imagine pastors, elders, and deacons of local churches partnering with campus ministers to expand the local vision of both church and campus ministry. Imagine youth who already in high school are being connected to existing faith communities, both on and off of college and university campuses. Imagine campus ministers who create a place for faith-filled community on campus, who engage the campus as a whole and who connect young adults with local churches intent on participating in their lives. Imagine all of this as the core of a vision for ministry with young adults. Imagine....

Brad Close is the Christian Reformed Campus Minister at Dalhousie University in Halifax, NS. Jamie VanderBerg is the Christian Reformed Campus Minister at

Opportunities to serve

"KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives is a dynamic church-based social justice movement.

KAIROS unites churches and religious organizations in a faithful ecumenical response to the call to 'do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God' (Micah 6:8). We deliberate on issues of common concern, advocate for social change and join with people of faith and goodwill in action for social transformation." *(quote from www.kairoscanada.org)*

"Oxfam International is a confederation of 13 like-minded organizations working together and with partners and allies around the world to bring about lasting change.

We work directly with communities and we seek to influence the powerful to ensure that poor people can improve their lives and livelihoods and have a say in decisions that affect them." *(quote from www.oxfam.org)*

"Operation Go Home works to help street-involved and at-risk youth from all over Canada through the Five Pillars of services and programs: Drop-In, Education, Employment, Outreach, and Reunite.

Operation Go Home is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping youth on the streets. Founded in 1971 by the late Rev. Norman Johnston (a police chaplain), OGH began by helping to reunite street youth with their families. Incorporated in 1985 and growing in reputation, Operation Go Home continued to help hundreds of youth and families across Canada. OGH remains *the only organization* in Canada that reunites youth with their families." *(quote from www.operationgohome.ca)*

"International Centre for Eradication for Poverty (ICEP) is a community based Centre that works at a grassroots level with linkages to academic institutions. It forges working relationships between community groups, NGOs, individuals and researchers to deal with issues related to poverty at a policy as well as operational level.

Poverty is multidimensional, multilayer and most complex issue. Its eradication requires comprehensive and integrated approach. ICEP, therefore, has adopted integrated approach to poverty eradication in the areas of education, health, housing, income generation and infrastructure." *(quote from www.eradicatepoverty.org)*

Festival of Faith & Music

Brett Alan Dewing

I am a music lover. And so, when I arrived at Calvin College for the 2009 Festival of Faith & Music (FFM), it was with a large dose of hero-worship. Over the three days of the conference, however, I came into close quarters with several of my favourite artists and found them to be ... refreshingly, utterly normal. Though immensely talented, these men and women proved to be only simple humans struggling to understand themselves and their God. But their struggles shone marvelous light on my own. Here, some highlights from the 2009 FFM.

Thurs, April 2 7:00 p.m.

Keynote speaker and successful artist Makoto Fujimura kicked off the 2009 FFM with a talk on the transgressive nature of the arts. "Art is not a tool," he said. It is wrestling with the world as it is in an attempt to create the world as it should be. Because of this, he maintained that "art always transgresses" by going beyond our assumptions and beliefs. "As artists, as much as we can, we need to swim upstream in culture instead of downstream," he said.

Because our world has "demonized ourselves, culture, the Church, and the gospel," he asked us how we can "allow our gifts to be gifts and not consumer products." His answer is that we "transgress in love," because "love is transgressive."

To illustrate his point, he told the story of the woman who broke her alabaster jar of costly perfume over Jesus' feet. In that time, it was not only an extravagant act but a highly intimate and sexual one as well. By anointing Jesus as her Bridegroom, she made a bold and transgressive statement. And as she did "the aroma in Bethany held DaVinci's paintings and Bach's sonatas."

Art is likewise a direct, intuitive, intentional act of extravagance. He questioned today's Christians who often see any extravagance as bad stewardship. Though it may seem ephemeral, he said, Mary's perfume was the only permanent thing Christ took with him to the cross.

If we truly believe that God is worthy of worship, he suggested, we must be willing to "waste" the perfume of our lives and assets in extravagant and transgressive acts of art to his glory and the redemption of our world.

Fri, April 3 2:30 p.m.

For many in attendance, the highlight of this year's FFM was the historic talk between philosopher and intellectual Dr. Cornel West and hip-hop artist Lupe Fiasco. Both men are great admirers of the other's work, but this was their very first meeting.

Dr. West set the tone for the talk by acknowledging the significance of the date in their common tradition: a day after what would have been Marvin Gaye's 70th birthday and a day before the anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination. What followed, appropriately, was a deeply insightful discussion of music and race in America.

As Lupe discussed his upbringing as one filled with "social-ideological artifacts" from around the world, Dr. West stressed the importance of learning from history. "There is no vocation," he said, "without invocation, no calling without recalling." However, in what would become a refrain of sorts, he called us all to "be a voice, not an echo."

For Lupe, this means inhabiting the stories of others. He lists his early influences as rappers like Jay-Z and Nas, but he admits that his real influence these days is the voice of the homeless man on the corner or the skateboarding youth in the park. By understanding the choices they and those in power over them have made, he seeks to speak in empathy for both those who are compassionate and those who are without compassion. "My voice went away," he explained, "blended with every voice. They're the same."

Dr. West applauded this while warning anyone against losing their true voice. "Nothing human is alien," he said, before encouraging all present to seek a fusion of vocation, voice, and vision. Vision, he clarified, is not a stare that titillates but rather is empowering and Biblical.

Legacy

When asked what legacy he wished to leave, Lupe Fiasco showed true wisdom. "If I change for the worse,"he began, "I don't want to be remembered. If I change for the better, I want to be remembered as 'he did not lead them astray'."

Elaborating on his responsibility as an artist, he explained that listeners ingest music, whether it lies or tells the truth. Four seconds of a lie outweighs sixty minutes of truth because it is four seconds that could have been filled with truth. "If I tell a lie on my record and sell a million records," he continued, "I've told a million lies."

In telling the truth, you destroy the facade that so many love and open yourself to "enemies with friendly faces that bring out the enemy in yourself." "Telling the truth," Lupe said, "that's a battle, a war you fight with the seen and unseen. And there's an army on the other side of untruth."

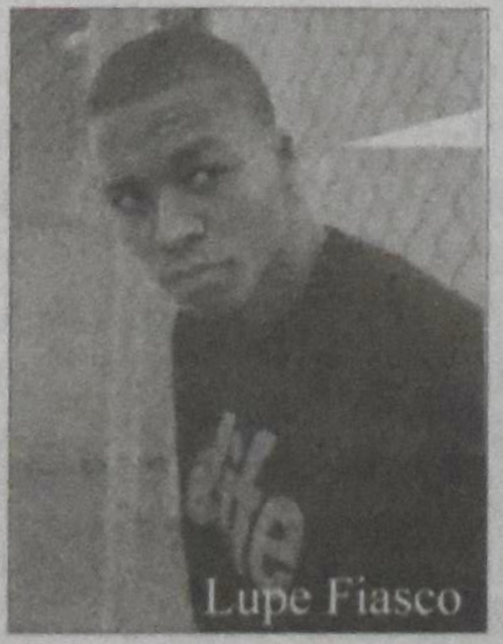
This prompted a discussion of the responsibility of presenting your own failures when they may be misconstrued. "The self is a corrupted situation," Lupe offered. "If you speak from the now ... you're going to get a lot of mess" due to the messages and ideologies which we have taken into ourselves from our culture. "When I look up," he said, "and see the chaos of the sky, I think 'I'm chaotic, too'." That is a main reason he believes in a God.

Hip-Hop

The talk concluded with a discussion of the history of hip-hop music. Dr. West explained that hip-hop is African culture postmodernized. It springs from a drum-centric, polyrhythmic, and antiphonal traditional, all of which is retained in today's hip-hop. There are no spectators in African music, he maintained, whether it be ancient or postmodern. Instead, it is a polyvocal communal experience of call and response.

Dr. West admitted that he loves hip-hop. It is often misunderstood by those who do not understand its roots, he said, just as Beethoven is misunderstood by those who do not understand the influences, history, and subtleties of his music. Hip-hop emerged from a voiceless community of urban poverty. When they wanted to make music and find their voice, the only tools they had were rhythm, voice, and old turntables.

Lupe Fiasco elaborated on the postmodernist elements of hip-hop by talking about sampling, the process of coopting a short passage from another recording and building a new song around it. He pointed out how a hip-hop producer can take a piece of music from any tradition, "understand it, deconstruct it, and re-synthesize it" in a way that will inspire, inform, and entertain.


Lupe Fiasco

It is about "who's doing it, not what it is." A fitting close to a fascinating discussion between two very strong "who"s.

The complete audio of this and other sessions can be found at http://www.calvin.edu/admin/sao/festival/2009/audio/

Fri, April 3 7:00 p.m.

Some quotes from Dr. Cornel West's talk

"You cannot lead the people if you do not love the people. You cannot save the people if you do not serve the people."

"Love is not a privatized sentiment but steadfast commitment to the welfare of others."

"Justice is what love looks like in public."

"It takes tremendous audacity to call yourself a person in the process of becoming a Christian."

"So many Christians are well-adjusted to injustice."

"The condition of truth is to allow suffering to speak."

"Try to keep track of the funk without deodorizing it in a way that denies the underside of American society."

"I need to love my crooked neighbour with my crooked heart as best I can."

"Indifference is inhumanity."

"Don't confuse giganticism with greatness. You've got a mega-church? Where's your mega-love? Your mega-justice? Your mega-mercy?"

"The Kingdom of God is always drastically different than any earthly kingdom."

"Questing for truth, tied to a love. This is black people at their best. This is white people at their best."

"Never allow your suffering to blind you to the suffering of others."

"If you take the black musical tradition seriously, you will not just be entertained."

"It is better to have mediocre theology and a life of love and compassion and justice than to have sophisticated theology and still be a xenophobe."

"The message of blues music is 'raise every voice'."

"What are we trying to do with this festival? ... Explore how to do good musical art in the public square.... Pop culture is not the bad part of culture. The problem is not culture. There is a problem in culture, but culture is not the problem."

– Ken Heffner, Festival Director

Sat, April 4 11:30 a.m.

David Dark, author of *Everyday Apocalypse*, spoke about his new book, *The Sacredness of Questioning Everything*. This being the Festival of Faith and Music, he focused on the role that music plays in our faith walk.

David Dark

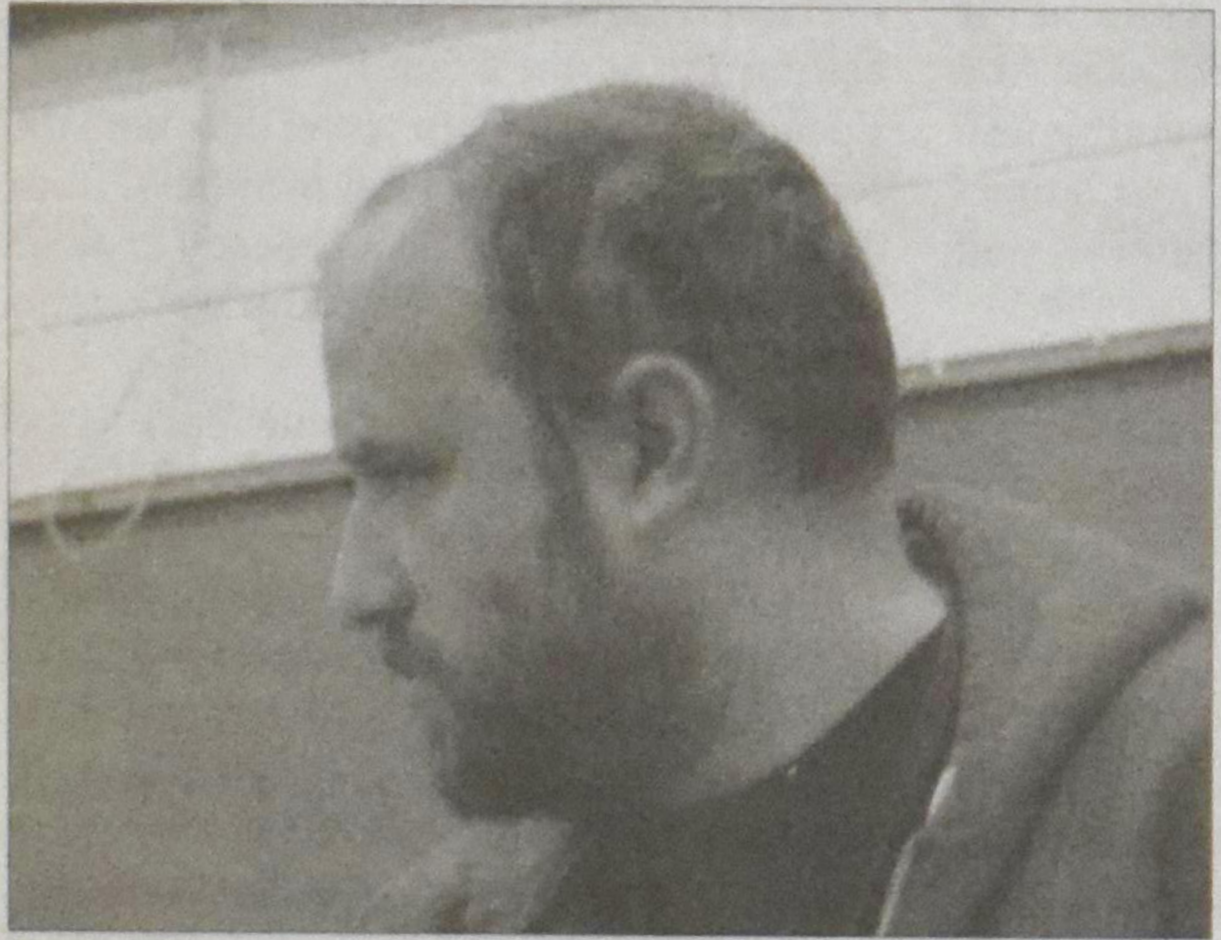
Often, he began, our media diet is kept in check by the fear of a perverse God who lords his wrath and power over us like an angry despot. Dark identifies this God as the "Brand God of American Christianity" and called us to question that image of God. "God is never not redeeming," he said, "never not reconciling."

For our part, he called us to be information gatherers and collectors of good things. By looking for truth in everything we hear, he says that we can find "the space of sacred witness and the space of the talk-about-able." Because "poetry is news that stays news," we can find great truth and encouragement from music, whatever its origin.

We must remember that God and man both are at work in art, even that which is divinely inspired: "Jeremiah did not fall asleep with a pen in his hand and wake up with a full scroll." Indeed, the human is an integral part of our communication with God. He cited the Scriptural decree on Gentile circumcision, noting that the apostles decided because "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit *and to us*."

"When we take in art religiously," he said, "we are looking for a wake-up call. We are looking to have our minds changed." He suggested we ask how we can receive music and do right by it.

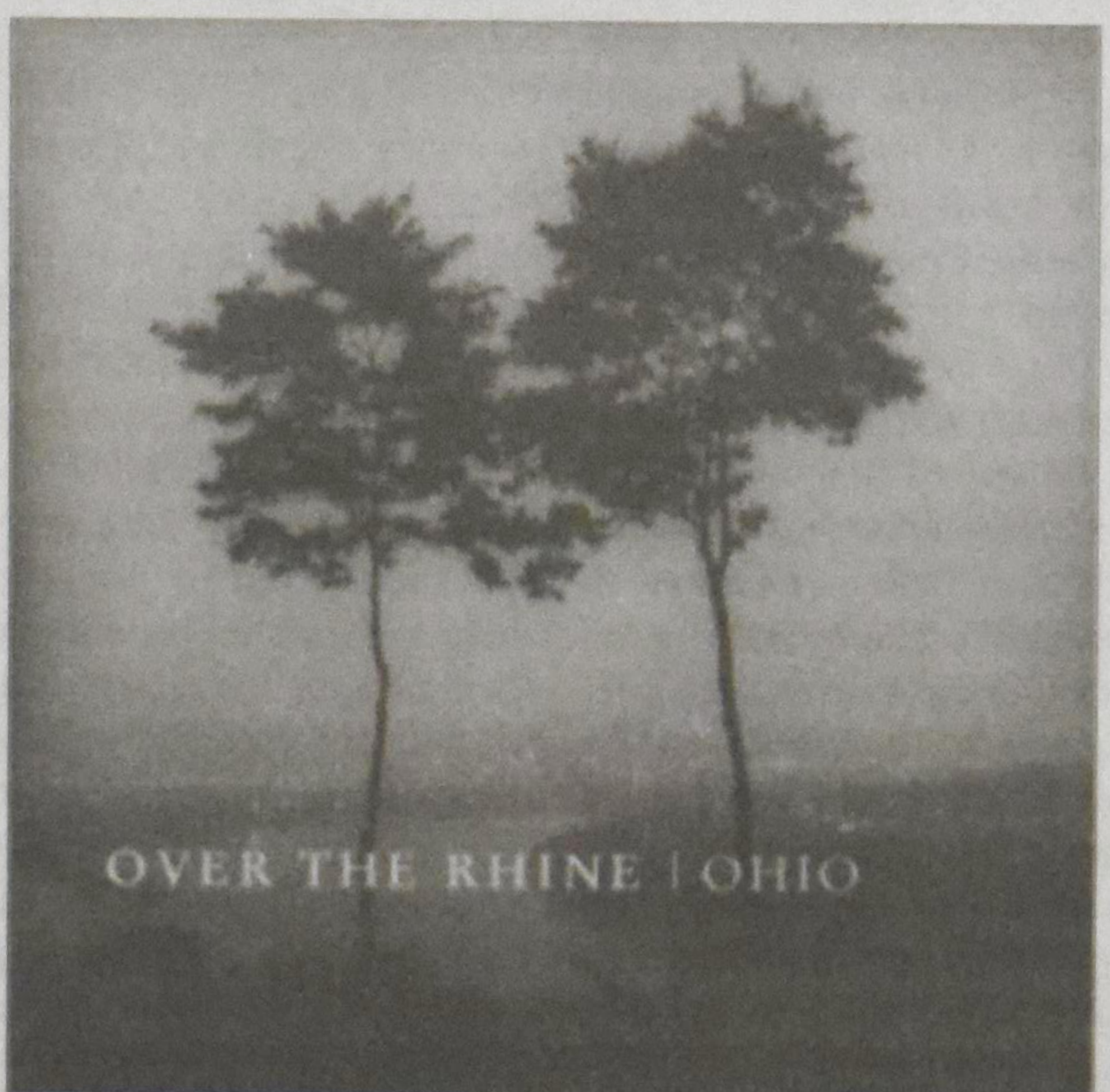
His suggestion was a discernment that stores up the words of truth from all sources. This, he called "your club of cosmic plainspeak." In explaining the term, he said that it is the place where you cease to be merely a spectator or consumer and have truth unveiled, what he called a "disruptively truthful awakening." That, he suggested, is the true purpose of music.


David Bazan presented his concert on April 2nd.

Sat, April 4 8:00 p.m.

The festival closed with a truly exceptional concert by Over the Rhine, Julie Lee, and Aaron Strumpel.

Aaron Strumpel was the winner of this year's Bandspotting contest, earning the honour of opening for the final concert. He and his eponymous band played a 15-minute set of original music. Using mostly Psalm texts as lyrics, Strumpel wove a dense and evocative tapestry to illuminate the desperation and beauty of the Psalms. The band's style was an athletic poly-instrument blast jam reminiscent of Arcade Fire. Sometimes literally running between instruments mid-song, they played everything from the trumpet to the typewriter, from full-throated piano to full-throated human wail. The effect was truly original and really quite exhilarating. They would have benefited from a set list, but I was left hungering for more. Unfortunately, their recorded music doesn't do them justice.



Nashville artist Julie Lee sang through her new EP, "Will There Really Be A Morning". While some of the songs were a bit middle-of-the-road, several tracks stood out as truly beautiful, including the title track (with lyrics from Emily Dickinson) and "The Other Half".

Finally, acclaimed folk group Over the Rhine took the stage for what was truly the most incredible concert experience of my life. Husband and wife team Linford Detweiler and Karin Bergquist are undisputed masters of songwriting, but they are also inspired performers. The passion and beauty of Bergquist's vocals brought me to tears more than once and had me dancing in my seat the rest of the time. For anyone who is not yet familiar with Over the Rhine, pick up any of their albums, especially the superb "Ohio" or "Drunkard's Prayer".

Brett Alan Dewing is co-editor of Christian Courier.

Find out more

www.calvin.edu/admin/sao/festival
www.makotofujimura.com
www.cornelwest.com
www.overtherhine.com
www.davidbazan.com
www.julielee.org
www.aaronstrumpel.com
www.lupefiasco.com

Exclusive interview with Linford Detweiler of *Over the Rhine*

Brett Alan Dewing: Can you tell me a little about your time on Canada?

Linford Detweiler: I attended all four years of high school in Three Hills, Alberta, at Prairie High School. It was a very conservative school, but there was a lot of emphasis on music. And hockey. Looking back at those years on the wide open prairie, and the northern lights, the oceans of windy wheat – it sort of feels like I went to high school on a moderately distant planet.

Linford Detweiler

B: I love your instrumental solo albums, and I think that you are unparalleled in the art of evocative song titles. If you were to rename "Fur Elise", what would you call it?

L: Fur Elise (Her Lips Taste Like Tears)

B: At what part in your process does song title come to you, and how do you come up with one?

L: I sit down at the piano and just daydream my little instrumental pieces, and then I come up with the titles later. On my first solo record, most of the titles were direct quotes from some young children friends of mine that I had supper with the evening after I finished the record.

B: Your name popped up in an episode of the TV show Angel. Are you aware of how that came about?

L: I'm not that familiar with the show, but the writer was a fan of Over the Rhine's music. He also wrote an episode of The X-Files loosely based around our record Good Dog Bad Dog.

B: If you were to record an EP of hymns, what would be on it?

L: Let The Lower Lights Be Burning
Give Me Oil In My Lamp
God Be With You (Till We Meet Again)

B: If you were to record an EP of covers, what would be on it?

L: Hallelujah (Leonard Cohen)
Have A Little Faith In Me (John Hiatt)
Love Hurts (Graham Parsons and Emmylou Harris)

B: It's been a long time since 'Til We Have Faces. Do you think you would have had it easier or harder getting started in today's climate?

L: Very good question. I'm not sure.

B: Speaking of 'Til We Have Faces, can I assume you're a fan of that incredible book? What other books inspire you?

L: Yes, I liked Lewis's last novel. But I was discussing it with a friend recently who is writing a book about it and realized I don't rembember the book very well – it's been too long. So I should read it again. I've gone through big Annie Dillard phases, Flannery O'Connor, Dylan Thomas, Thomas Merton, Frederick Buechner.... If I find a writer who gets me, I tend to spend some time there.

B: What else would you like to add?

L: I think Canada is a very civilized country. We've gotten to spend quite a bit of time there – especially when we were touring and recording with Cowboy Junkies. I hope Over the Rhine's music can find a home in Canada.

Pastoral Excellence

SUSTAINING Pastoral EXCELLENCE

Some thoughts about pastoring the pastor

Cecil Van Niejenhuis

It's Sunday morning. Nobody talked much on the way to church today. Mom and Dad had words. But the kids were quiet. They knew better than to speak up when the air was thick with the tension of an argument.

They got to church, parked the car and put on their public faces. By the time they walked into the sanctuary, they were warm and kind and no one could have known that behind the smiles were pockets of hurt. For the first while, worship was a challenge.

Scenes like this happen to all of us at one time or another and could easily describe a pastor's family. Sometimes with the extra tension of a not-quite-as-polished-as-I-had-hoped message adding to the madness of the morning dash, the last minute details at home and the drive to church can be difficult. But then, once the car is parked, the public faces are set in place and yes, for the first while, worship – and leading worship – can be a challenge.

The point is that before anything else, it is the simple ordinariness, the honest humanness of a pastor which needs to be honored. Pastors are people. They have hopes and fears, and aches and pains, and hobbies and quirks, and their faith journeys are as wonky and real as any of our faith journeys – filling us now with comfort and joy, now with questions and doubts. Pastors are serious and silly both. And why not? Pastors are human beings who sometimes get it right and sometimes get it wrong.

So that's the first thing: pastors are utterly ordinary human beings who need to brush their teeth. Pastors are persons.

And then there's this other thing: the utterly extraordinary demands of their position within the community. These persons are pastors.

A walk in holy, holey shoes

Part of the challenge of caring for pastors is trying to understand what it is like to walk in a pastor's shoes. If we can gain some appreciation for the dynamics which are part and parcel of a pastor's place in the community, we may be better able to care for them appropriately. Let me suggest at least seven ways in which the pastoral role carries extraordinary demands. And it's not that each or that any of these seven is overwhelming on its own, but together, they add up like straws on a camel's back.

1) The rhythm of a pastor's weekly schedule is at odds with the rhythm of most of the rest of the congregation, and certainly at odds with the rest of his/her family! When others are winding down towards the weekend, pastors are winding up. On the weekend, when the family has the most time to be together for visiting and play and errands, a pastor generally has the least time available.

2) Pastors participate in every major moment of the church community – not just some of them. Whether it is grief, anxiety, conflict or celebration, the work of pastoral care can be very draining. And how does one measure emotional drain? When combined with the challenge of preaching, and the vulnerability which honest preaching requires, the stress on overall health and vitality is significant.

3) Just passin' through? This is a challenging point. For their own mental health, pastors need to settle into their church community as though they are at home. But it is also true that pastors are not entirely at home in the way that many others are. There is an unusual tension that exists for a pastor and family: they need to live as though they are at home in a community which will one day not be home.

4) While a pastor is one of the people, and lives among the people, he/she is also by virtue of ordination, set apart for service – and that very role, of calling attention to the presence of the Other, sets a pastor apart. There is a certain "otherness" that a pastor wears as part of his/her ordination.

5) Pastors and their families live in the public eye. This reality is part and parcel of being a public leader. And there are often unwritten expectations which pastors and their families discover along the way.

6) Special holiday seasons such as Christmas and Easter can be challenging. These feast days in the church seem to call for the regular presence of the pastor, while congregants are free to join with distant family and friends. I know a pastor who "worked" Christmas Day for 25 consecutive years without ever considering that it might be an option to ask for the day off. Nor did the suggestion ever occur to anyone in the church.

7) Pastors find themselves in the odd position of seeming to be accountable to many – as in, to the entire congregation, and at the same time seeming to be accountable to no one. Job descriptions do not exist for many pastors, and matters surrounding reporting, evaluation and the setting of short-term and long-term goals at the Council level are often underdeveloped.

Ordinary and extraordinary both

It is difficult for any of us to understand what it is to walk in another's shoes, and this is certainly true when it comes to understanding what it's like to walk in the shoes of a pastor. As much as possible, we do well to honor the pastor as an ordinary human being whose role carries extraordinary demands. We may not forget that a pastor is a person. And we may not forget that this person is a pastor. These two realities are mysteriously distinct and true at the same time.

The question becomes – given the unique position that pastors and their families occupy within a church community – how can they be given appropriate care, and what shape might such care take?

I would suggest thinking about this on three levels.

1) Each and every member of a congregation participates in the pastor's care by virtue of personal interaction. This is a call to engagement – not as a silent partner but as a communicant. Speak a word of appreciation, ask a question, raise a concern – simply acknowledge the pastor's presence as real. Words of encouragement are always welcome, and prayers are the baptismal obligations which bless every child in the Christian community, pastors included! And do take an interest in the pastor and spouse which goes beyond their role, and honors the reality of their persons, families and social needs.

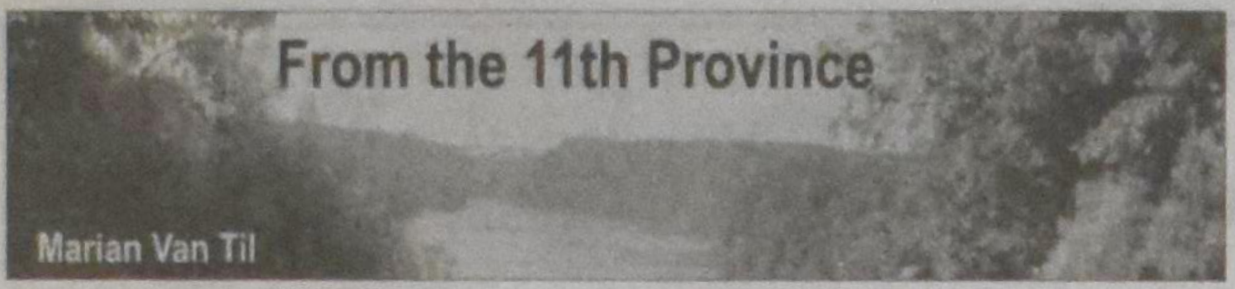
2) At the level of a council, there are a number of things which can be especially helpful:

- View the pastor as a partner in ministry; with the elders, a shepherding team.
- Ensure healthy conversation around matters of expectation, purpose and accomplishment. A well-defined job description can assist in setting goals, offering feedback and providing regular evaluation. It can also be helpful in monitoring whether a pastor is overachieving or underachieving, and help to focus his/her energies.
- Build on the areas of a pastor's strengths, and then complement with staff or volunteers in areas of lesser strength.
- Be generous in the area of continuing education. Continuing to learn is essential to a pastor's wellbeing and a clear way for a council to nurture the pastor's health, growth and creativity.
- Institute a sabbatical policy. The long-term health of pastors in this demanding work makes extended periods of rest and renewal vital. Rested, respected and loved pastors – those who receive sabbaticals! – make for pastors better able to respect and love their congregations.
- Encourage the pastor to participate in some form of mentoring with peers. These are people who know what it is to walk in a pastor's shoes – both the joy of it and the burden. The opportunity for healthy vulnerability can be immensely refreshing.
- When it comes to "pastor appreciation" be cautious about splashy public moments. These may be awkward for members of the congregation, for the pastor personally and for the pastor's family.
- Encourage the pastor to spend time with the full range of congregation members, from those who are distressed and needy to those who are soaring and the many walkers in between.
- Know what your pastor considers to be play, and encourage it!

3) Beyond the care given by a council and the congregation, pastors and pastor couples need to take some responsibility for their own care – which is another conversation altogether.

One last note – a bonus point, if you will – we can show care to pastor couples by the way we care for their children. Treat them not as pastor's children, but as children.

Cecil Van Niejenhuis is a pastor, was recently hired as the pastor/congregation consultant for the CRCNA's Office of Pastor-Church Relations, and is an utterly ordinary human being.



He is risen indeed!

This column, my 47th since July 2005 when I returned to C.C., marks a change. It is less than half as long as columns were then. That means I must re-think the topics I choose and how I cover them. Depth may suffer, but succinctness is a virtue. If you like delving deeper, please visit a new project of mine online where I (and some other writers) do that: it's called Reformed Revelry. Look for it at <www.reformedrevelry.wordpress.com> .

"The Lord is risen!" proclaims the pastor.

"He is risen indeed!" the congregation shouts back joyfully.

That's how thousands of church services the world over begin on Easter morning. What a welcome proclamation it is, especially after the five long Lenten weeks of watching, waiting, praying and repenting as we followed Jesus through the Lenten gospel readings, "his face set like flint" towards Jerusalem and his inevitable death.

"Inevitable" has the aura of fate about it. But his death wasn't fate (nothing that happens is, we Calvinists confidently say when we read the Bible aright). It's a mysterious truth: God ordained from the foundation of the world that Christ should die for us. "He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake," Peter tells us (1.1:20), and God "chose *us* in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight," says Ephesians 1:4.

One great hope

Christ's resurrection radically changes our lives here and now. It is *the* source of our hope. We know, with Paul, that had Christ not been raised from the dead our faith would be in vain, and we would be pitiable above all people. Who wants to stake one's life on a delusion? But since Christ *is* risen (present tense) we can affirm "He is risen indeed" without a shadow of a doubt. And we exult, "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

If we then testify to his resurrection in our hope-less, secular age, we will experience what the apostles did: "With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all" (Acts 4:33).

Such testifying can be dangerous. Satan's forces seem ever stronger. Paul stood on trial "because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead" (Acts 23:6). I suspect that before my life here ends many of us will be appointed to do the same. It is highly likely we will see out-and-out persecution, not just the injustices against Christians that crop up periodically now, but suffering for Christ's sake as many around the world already do.

Will we remember our resurrection hope then? Will we continue to testify to God's goodness? Our Mighty Lord assures us, "I tell you, whoever publicly acknowledges me, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God" (Luke 12:8). But conversely – and the implications are terrifying – "If any of you are ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of you when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

Will we be persistent, and persistently pray that God's will be done on earth as in heaven? Jesus asked (in the context of the parable of the persistent widow), "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). Will he?

Re-knit glorified bodies

There's another aspect to Resurrection power. That is of course the actual resurrection of the dead – first the righteous, then unbelievers – when "the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him" (Matt. 25:31). Our hope in God confesses the stupendous truth that Christ *will* return and our bodies that were "sown" perishable will be raised imperishable (1 Cor. 15:42).

We profess every Sunday (if our church uses the creed, as it should), "I believe in the resurrection *of the body*." Not only spiritual union with Christ. At the sound of the last trumpet, our fragile skin-and-bone, flesh-and-blood will be re-knit in an instant – no matter how long dead or how scattered our molecules – and we will leap from our graves with a glorified body like Christ's glorified body. The difference will be that his body bears his scars, as it does even now – the nail marks, the sword piercing – and will bear them for all eternity so that we can say, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

Marian Van Til, a former C.C. editor, lives in Youngs-town, NY, with her husband, Ed Cassidy, their six cats and a dozen pond goldfish.

The rise and fall of Che Guevara

A review of the film "Che"
by **Walter Miedema**

For those who have never watched an epic movie, this is a good place to start. Plan an afternoon or an evening, and plunk yourself down in a theatre for an afternoon to educate yourself about the life of one of Latin America's most portrayed and least understood historical personages.

For most of us, all we know of Ernesto "Che" Guevara is his nickname (which is the Argentine Spanish equivalent of "um" or "uh") and the image of a thin man with an unkempt beard and steely stare wearing a beret emblazoned with a small star. In almost five and a half hours, (each part is about 118 minutes long) Steven Soderbergh and Benicio del Toro give us a film that takes us beyond "The Motorcycle Diaries" through two key periods in Guevara's life.

The film is divided up into two parts, the first being Guevara's involvement in the Cuban revolution, and the second being his lesser known attempts to bring about revolution in Bolivia. Both screenplays are based on Guevara's diaries from the pertinent periods. Guevara was a prolific writer, and there is much to be taken from these sources. This two part structure serves to highlight comparisons between the two campaigns. As such the two parts differ significantly in character and feel.

One man, two revolutions

The feel of the first half, where the communist forces are victorious in Cuba, is lush. The colours are deep, the visuals are broad, and time is measured in the distance the revolutionary forces are from Cuba's capital, Havana. Part one also contains sequences from Guevara's visit to New York City when he addressed the United Nations in his capacity as Cuban Minister of Industry. Interestingly, these sequences are shot in black and white, as if to heighten our awareness that this is the Guevara with which we are most familiar. These are also the only parts of the film where English is spoken. This choice is perhaps made because they are meant to portray him as the popular icon that North America remembers of him.

Part two is much bleaker, the colour palette is limited and the colours are bleached out. The actual width of the projected image is narrower, and time is marked as a series of numbered days with no approaching goal in sight. This limiting of visuals does not impede the cinematography at all. One ambush sequence is particularly stunning.

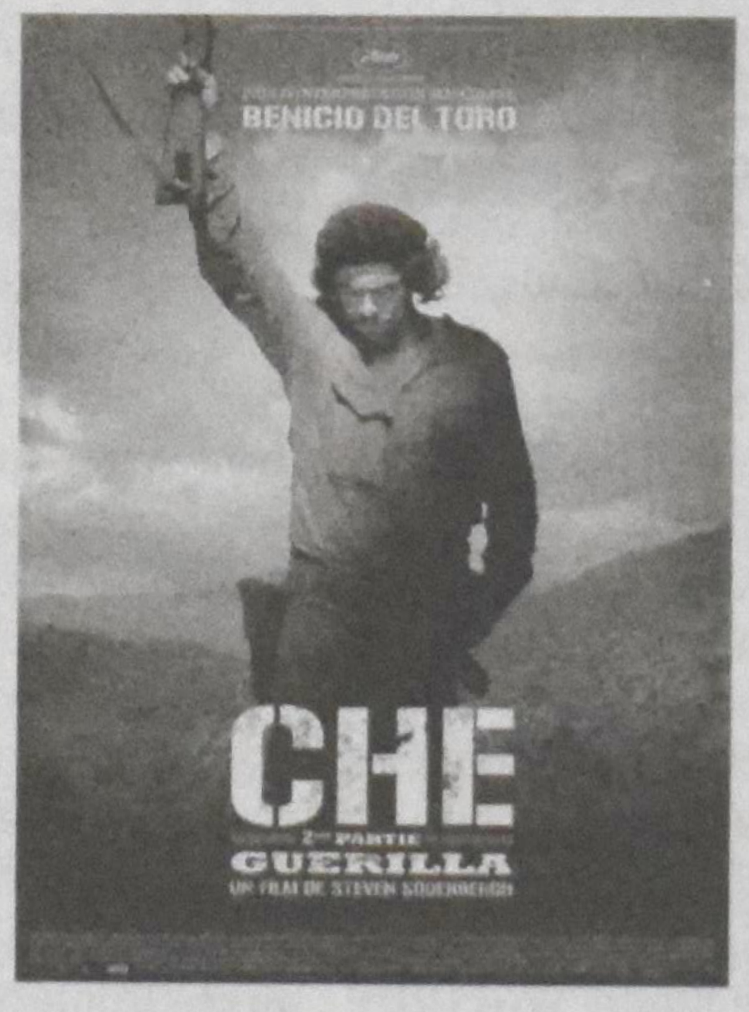
There are also a number of sequences toward the end of part two that mirror the beginnings of part one. In particular there are two sequences that focus on Guevara's asthma. Both scenes are major turning points where he either overcomes his condition or begins to be overcome by it.

This obvious contrast draws attention to the similarities and differences in both scenarios. In both cases Guevara is a foreigner. His success in Cuba can be seen to be highly dependant on the support of Fidel and Raul Castro.

A full but incomplete picture

It is important to note that this film does not create a comprehensive portrait of Guvara, although what it does show is in satisfying detail. Apart from the black and white sequences in the first half nothing is mentioned of his world travels to Africa (he had a significant influence on the guerrilla conflict that still rages in the Congo today) and Asia.

A good biopic both lionizes and humanizes its subject, and this movie does well in giving a well-fleshed-out portrayal of Guevara. Del Toro portrays him as a man who comes into his own and who is in the end defeated by his own well-intentioned hubris.



In a key sequence from the second half of the film, Guevara's guard inquires about the presence of religion in Castro's Cuba, for he has heard there isn't any. Guevara responds that there is no "official" religion in Cuba but that many people continue to believe. "What about you?" asks his guard. "I believe in humanity." Guevara states. Ultimately it seems that this trust was what led to his defeat. The people in Cuba had been ready to accept his message of revolution; those in Boliva were frightened of it.

In the vast majority of the film only Spanish is spoken with English subtitles provided. I must admit, at times the subtitles came rather quickly and distracted from the visuals; this should not prove an impediment to most viewers familiar with subtitles and does much to add to the realism to the film. I was also surprised that this film merited only a PG rating, but the rating fits. Any romance in Guevara's life is merely suggested, and while there is a large amount of violence, there is very little gore.

Walter Miedema is a some-time seminary student on leave of absence and living in Vancouver BC for a year where he is working as a caretaker. He writes in his spare time.

Identity

Homosexuality: time to put our words into action

Keith Knight

There is something to be learned from the current theological quagmire that is plaguing the Anglican Church of Canada over the blessing of same-sex civil unions. It is a debate that is creating a huge rift between North America and the rest of the Anglican world. The debate is blatantly theological for some, and simply a matter of justice for others.

The Anglican Church of Canada says that God loves everyone, including those who are practicing homosexuals. Blessing same-sex civil unions, though considered by many dioceses across the country, are currently being carried out in only a few churches in the New Westminster, B.C. diocese. Perhaps a dozen or less of those "blessings" have taken place.

Less than 20 Anglican churches out of the 2,800 have left the denomination over this issue. They count among them some of the largest churches in the denomination. For them, the issue is theological. They see the homosexual lifestyle as sin and not being conducive to a Christian walk. Their perspective is shared by most of the 77 million Anglicans worldwide who make up the Anglican Communion, especially the huge Anglican presence in Africa.

Practicing care?

Lost in that discussion, however, is the pastoral care for the homosexual person. The Christian Reformed Church has done an admirable job in laying out its theological position: we are all image-bearers of Christ who need to be supported and encouraged as we deal with our sin; embrace the homosexual but condemn the practice (homosexuality).

Synods have studied the matter for more than 30 years, and the church has produced an impressive and concise booklet called *Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members*, which captures the essence of that thorough study. That booklet belongs on every church council's table and on the desk of every pastor. Perhaps more importantly, it belongs in every home.

As good as we are at producing the paperwork, we have been woefully negligent in putting it into practice. Many homosexual members don't experience that grace of which the report speaks. Perhaps the most moving segment of that pastoral care booklet is the church's prayer of confession. It says in part:

"Instead of trying to become a place where persons who love you and are homosexual could find a gracious dwelling, we confess that we have continued to build walls. We have avoided them. We have been cruel. We have called names and used insulting language. We have wished that they would just go away."

While recent statistics don't exist, a 1997 survey of churches revealed that 77 per cent of the respondents said they didn't implement the guidelines because they didn't see any need. A smaller number are simply afraid to deal with the issue.

Statistics Canada indicates that one per cent of Canadians consider themselves homosexual. There is no reason to doubt that those figures are any different within the CRC. Within any given congregation, up to a half dozen church members are struggling quietly with their homosexuality.

The church has been relatively silent over the past half-dozen years, either oblivious to the fact that this is seen as the next significant issue to face the church or naïve in thinking that this doesn't affect us.

Various practices

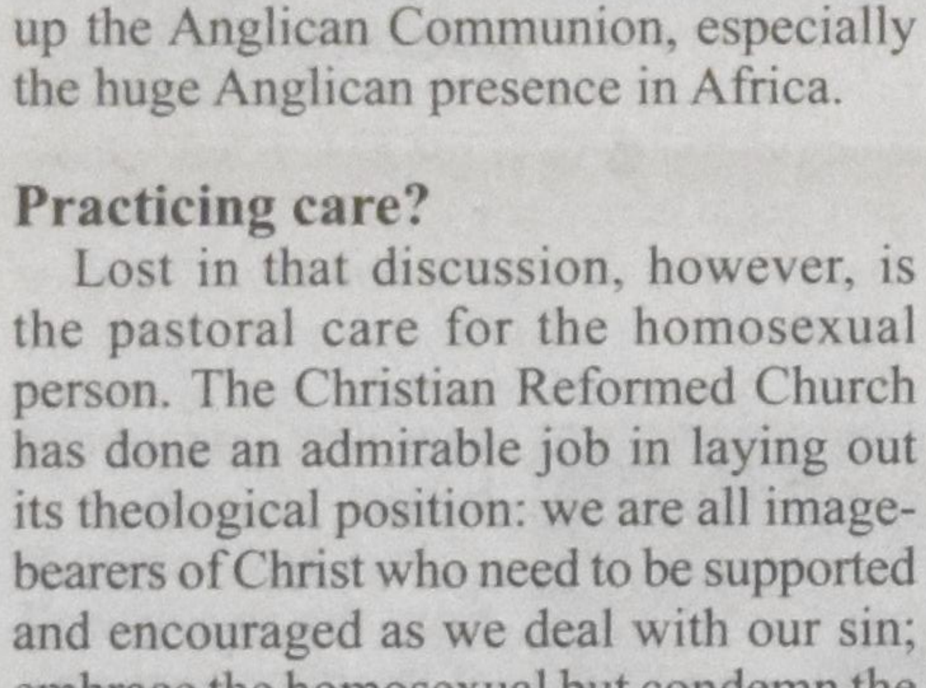
How do we create a safe place within our local church for those who live daily with homosexuality? Churches will respond differently. Some will develop full-orbed ministries specifically designed for those seeking healing in the area of their sexual practice and desires. Some may create a small group as a safe place to provide support and encouragement. Some may simply refer their members to an appropriate specialized ministry where counseling services are available.

We need to firstly acknowledge that our church has homosexual members and then provide the assurance that we are all part of the family of God. God's amazing grace is poured out for all. We need to provide an environment for confession of sins and accountability to other Christians. We need to model and encourage nonsexual relationships with people of the same gender and the opposite gender.

There are a number of excellent ministries sprinkled across North America that provide a wealth of resources for ministers and for local churches. Some have developed networks of professional counselors and veritable libraries of print and video resources. Many of them belong to Exodus International, part of a global ministry to and with homosexuals. They hold numerous regional and international conferences to provide support and encouragement, both for church leaders who long to develop a greater understanding of the issues, and for those who are longing to deal with their own homosexuality.

The time has come to develop church-based or classis-based ministries for and with our Christian brothers and sisters with whom we worship weekly and who live daily with homosexuality. It is time to turn our words into action. Organizations such as Exodus International and their hundreds of ministries across the continent are a good place to start.

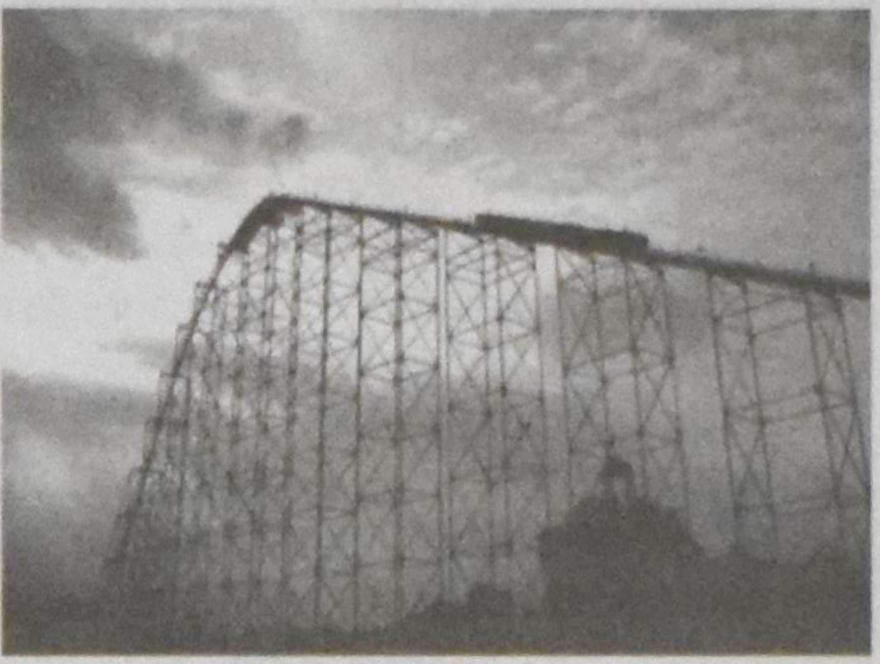
Keith Knight is editor of the Anglican Journal *and a member of First Christian Reformed Church in Guelph, Ont. He is also a former editor and publisher of Christian Courier in its former life as* Calvinist Contact.



Gene Robinson becomes the first openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church. Here he receives a miter from his partner.

The Mamba – facing fear

Words from Wild Horses
Kenny Warkentin



This is the Mamba. It is one of the world's tallest roller coasters and has one of the fastest drop speeds. Two years ago I went on it. I had never been on a roller coaster before. I stood there staring at this huge monster, wondering why my feet were taking me closer and actually getting in line. As I waited in line, I thought, "where is the nearest exit?" but then I also knew I would regret not doing it. So I boarded the car, did up my seat belt and off we went, at least most of me did.

A friend sat beside me, looking at me, asking me if I was scared! Scared? I could barely get words out of my mouth. He told me to look around the sky. I couldn't – it was impossible for me. I gripped the bar with all my might; I squeezed my eyes as tight as possible; I tried to take deep breathes. I couldn't breath. I realized I was paralyzed with fear for the first time in my 40 years of life. Never before had I ever felt this way. I couldn't move, couldn't speak, couldn't even open my eyes. All I knew was that we kept going higher and higher and I couldn't make it stop. Then there was a slight pause, we had made it to the top and even now as I write this, I feel that tingling in my belly button, that weird sensation you got swinging on a swing when you went really high. How could I have been so daft as to think I could do this? I was going to perish! But no, I didn't. The pause was ended by a vertical drop. As I opened my mouth, a groan was all that was heard. It sounded like a death cry, the last utterance of sound, the only sound I could make.

In close to two minutes the ride was over, and I felt like *I* was over. I was glad to have done it, but realized that never again did I need to face that fear, or want to. You see, I am afraid of heights. Don't ask me when it began, because I cannot remember; all I know is that this man is still afraid of heights. What I can say is that I have been on one of the tallest roller coasters and faced a giant fear. I did it. Bought the T-shirt. And I don't ever need to do the Mamba again.

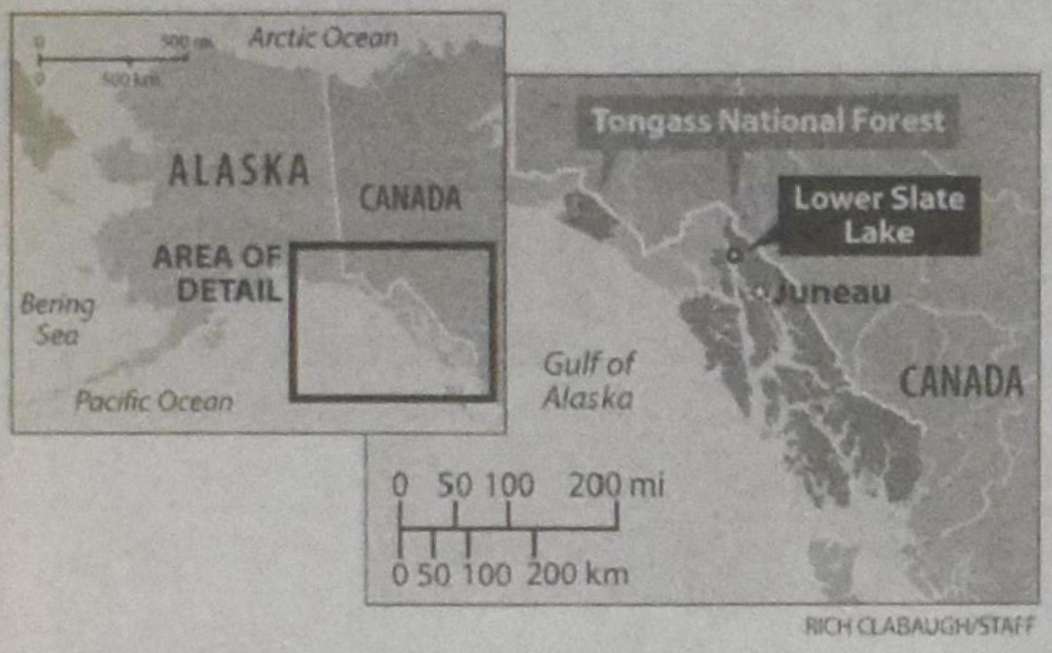
Other Mambas

Looking back over my life, I have faced some giant fears. Four years ago, I stood in the unknown as I walked away from the identity of being gay into a full redeeming relationship with Jesus Christ. How could Jesus redefine me? Could he really redeem my identity? As I faced the monumental fear of "will Jesus be enough for me?" "will this work?" I was reminded to continue to submit myself to God, to seek him with my whole heart and that he would direct my steps. It began to work, as I faced the fear head-on. I became more diligent in spiritual disciplines and fell headlong in love with my heavenly Father. The same friend who sat with me on the Mamba said that if I faced the fear of heights that I could also face the fear of marriage. (Paula and I got married two months later.) I didn't fear marriage, but I feared failure. Would I be a good husband, a good provider, would I be enough for her? Would I eventually fail her and hurt her miserably? Just as I lived through the Mamba ride, I realized that I would live through the wedding day and the wedding night, and I would live each day afterward.

Scared? You bet, but I kept giving my fear to Jesus, asking him to be my strength as I admitted my weakness to him. The Mamba ride showed me fear. It showed me how facing an issue without God can paralyze me, if I chose to do it on my own. I wonder if I had asked God into that moment, would the ride have turned out better? I learned a lot about fear, God and how I deal with fear from the Mamba ride. It amazes me what God will use to teach me about who he is and who I am in him. Do you have stories of how God used something to speak to your heart? I would love to hear them.

Kenny Warkentin (paintpent@mts.net) is an avid blogger, thinker and artist.

Alaskan lake's fate could echo across continent



RICH CLABAUGH/STAFF

Todd Wilkinson (CSM)

Roger William, a soft-spoken former chief of the Tsilhqot'in Nation in Canada, and Tim Bristol, a recreational fishing activist in the United States, have never met. They adhere to divergent cultural customs in different countries on opposite sides of rugged, glacier-sheathed mountains. But they share a common concern about the persistence of clean, untainted water and how it is becoming an ever-rarer commodity in the world.

Uniting their attention is a landmark legal case now before the US Supreme Court. Both men say the fate of faraway Lower Slate Lake, a tiny unremarkable tarn in the coastal Alaskan rainforest above the Pacific Ocean, holds huge implications for lakes across the continent.

The question soon to be answered by America's highest court is this: Should natural lakes be used as dumping grounds for wastes generated by hardrock mines?

Nearly four decades after Congress passed the federal Clean Water Act to protect waterways from industrial pollution, the proposal by Coeur d'Alene Mines Corp. to dispose of tons of effluent in Lower Slate has sparked an international debate.

Legal scholars say it assumes a bigger profile in these tough economic times and amid soaring gold prices, yet the issue, they say, transcends the localized dichotomy of jobs versus environment.

Coeur's blueprint for the underground Kensington gold mine located in the Tongass National Forest 45 miles north of Alaska's capital, Juneau, was made possible by regulatory changes implemented during the Bush administration in 2002, enabling companies to use lakes as lower-cost tailings impoundments.

The action deepened a fracture line between environmentalists and industry. Moreover, it casts a spotlight on two federal regulators: the US Army Corps of Engineers, which gave Coeur the green light, and the US Environmental Protection Agency, which is accused of violating its own standards.

Environmental attorney Tom Waldo with the firm Earthjustice says that the impetus for the Clean Water Act was a legacy of contamination and public health concerns caused by industrial companies, municipalities, and agriculture historically treating waterways as convenient, expendable repositories for waste.

He points to a benchmark ruling during the 1970s against the Reserve Mining Co. in Minnesota, which disposed of taconite tailings, laden with asbestos, into Lake Superior from its processing facility, contaminating drinking water. In the US West, water quality in an estimated 40 percent of rivers has been impaired by historic mining sites long abandoned.

"The lesson is that it's not a good idea to discharge mining wastes, especially those that are hardly benign, directly into water bodies," Mr. Waldo explains, echoing what he said before the Supreme Court justices in January (Coeur Alaska, Inc. v. Southeast Alaska Conservation Council). Coeur, meanwhile, argued that entombing tailings in Lower Slate would actually result in a smaller development footprint over the alternative of stacking crushed earth in a remote wetland. A decision is expected before June.

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Classifieds

Birthdays

Raard, Fr. 1934 April 28 Grimsby, Ont. 2009

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to our heit and Pake

Lieuwe Regnerus

Who celebrates his **75th Birthday**.

Thanking God for this milestone are:

Jane, his wife

Lloyd
Marlene (who also has a BIG birthday April 20)
Roger & Elma – Marita, Amanda, Quinton, Natasha
Andrew & Melinda – Cassandra, Andrew James

Praise the Lord

Sybrand Koole

celebrates his **95th Birthday**
on May 8, 2009 D.V.
a Day of Thankfulness for him, his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren
Blessings abound

Address: P402 Holland Christian Homes
7900 McLaughlin Rd S
Brampton ON L5Y 5A7

For the Lord is good and his love endures forever:
his faithfulness continues through all generations.
Psalm 100:5

With joy and thanksgiving to our heavenly Father, the children of

Henny Eggink-Bakker

wish to announce the **90th Birthday** of our mother, D.V. on April 28, 2009.

We invite all her friends and family to celebrate with us at an **Open House** on May 2, 2009 from 2-4 p.m. at Parkview Meadow Retirement Centre (main entrance) Townsend, Ontario.

With much love from her children,
48 grandchildren & 80 great-grandchildren:
John† & Jenny Eggink
Mary & John Katerberg
Helen & Albert Bosma
Harry & Dianne Eggink
Gary & Maria Eggink
Bert† & Dorene Eggink
George & Betty Eggink
Rita & Ross Gibbons
Jack & Debbie Eggink

Correspondence: Henrietta Eggink
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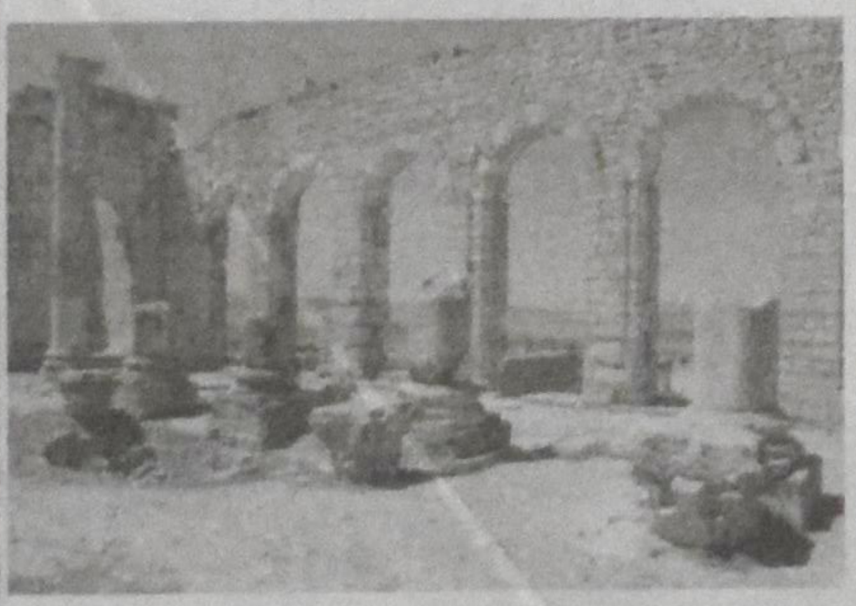

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Anniversaries

May 4, 1949 Vlaardingen, The Nederlands - May 4, 2009 Grimsby, Canada

With thanksgiving to our Lord for his faithfulness, we celebrate the **60th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents (grandparents and great-grandparents)

Paul and Johanna (nee Van Zanten) Droppert
Wedding Text: Matthew 19:6

We pray that the Lord will continue to be with you and bless you!

With love and congratulations from:
Elly & Martin Boerefyn, *Grimsby, Ontario*
Tim & Davina, Jeff & Maria, Lisa & Cody, Stephen & Natalie
Carolyn & Elliott, Sarah & Irvin, Jennifer & Moses, Richard
Corrie & Piet Snieder, *Hollyrood, Ontario*
Michelle & Gary, Johanna & Andrew, Nicholas & Kari (girlfriend)
Leo & Beatrice Droppert, *Wainfleet, Ontario*
Jason & Beth Anne, Jeremy & Tara, Timothy & Laura, Joshua & Katie
Paul & Diane Droppert, *Vineland, Ontario*
Rachel & Paul, David, Bryan & Holly, Steven & Marley
and 24 great-grandchildren

Open House will be on Saturday, May 9, 2009 from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Smithville Christian Reformed Church, 6522 Smithville Road, Smithville L0R 2A0

Address: 136 Mountain Road RR 2, Grimsby ON L3M 4E7

As family, we praise God for **60 years of Marriage** for

James and Wilma Bergstra

To honour this wonderful occasion, an **Open House** (with music!) will be held at First Christian Reformed Church
201 4th Ave West, Owen Sound ON N4K 4V1 (519-376-8411)
on the very day – May 9, 2009
from 2-4 p.m.

Their address: 109 West St RR 5, Owen Sound ON N4K 5N7

Obituary

Tzummarun, Friesland May 6, 1911 Thunder Bay, Ontario April 8, 2009

On April 8, 2009, our Mem and Beppe,

Tjitske Postuma (nee **SYBESMA**)

went home to be with her Lord and Saviour. As her family, we have been blessed with our dear mother's long life of 97 years.

Celebrating her life are her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren:

Ann & Cecil Haagsma, *London, ON*
Caroline & Jeff – Adam, Jordan, Megan
Trudy – Monica, Mikayla
Elaine & Travis – Erin, Gavin
Sarah
Ray & Jane Postuma, *Winnipeg, MB*
Joan & Rolly – Nicole, Kyle, Alena
Ron & Myriam – Adrianna, Alexander
Tim & Erika – Lucas, Ella, Caleb
Lynnette & Randall
John & Marge Postuma, *Caledonia, ON*
Ted & Natasha – Meaghan, Melanie
Christine & Jason – Lauren, Tristan
Michelle & Paul – Asher, Arren
Laura & Jonathan
Sarah & Ryan
Wilma & Tony Kempe, *Thunder Bay, ON*
Emma & Jesse
Ben & Patricia Postuma, *Thunder Bay, ON*
Justin & Stephanie
Brandon & Natalie
Seamus & April
Tomas
Bridget

Tjitske is also survived by her brother Sybe Sybesma, sister Evertje Roorda, sister and brother-in-law Grace & Art Stelpstra, and sisters-in-law Sietske Sybesma and Aaltje Stoer. Our Mem was predeceased by her husband and our Heit and Pake, Bindert, in 1993.

A service of thanksgiving and celebration took place in the First Christian Reformed Church, Thunder Bay ON, on Saturday, April 11, 2009 with Rev. Henry VanderBeek officiating.

Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!
1 Corinthians 15:57

Contact: Ben Postuma 409 White Park Road, Thunder Bay ON P7G 1T1
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New Life CRC is looking for a

Pastor

who is blessed with the gifts of leadership, including the development of leadership in others, encouragement, pastoral care and teaching. In particular we are seeking someone who can provide energetic and creative support to our ministries and be a mentor to our new members and our youth.

The successful candidate(s) must be theologically trained and open to ordination in the CRCNA. Our new Pastor will be part of a team ministry and fellowship with a multi-generational congregation.

Direct inquiries and resumes to the Administrator of the Search Committee, Nicole Ensing at **worship@newlifecrc.net**.

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Please send inquiries to:
Search Committee, Mountainview CRC,
290 Main St. E., Grimsby ON L3M 1P8
or email: searchcommittee@mountainviewcrc.org.

Further information may be obtained by visiting our website www.mountainviewcrc.org
or contacting Annette Klingenberg, chair of Search Committee, at **905-563-5736** (evenings 7pm-10pm EST)

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While applications will be accepted until a new Executive Director is selected, interested persons are encouraged to submit materials to the address below by May 31, 2009.

Applications should include a current CV and will be held in strict confidence. This advertisement is directed primarily at Canadian citizens and permanent residents.

Please send your applications to:
Mr. J. VanHuizen, Chair, Search Committee
8 Applecrest Lane, RR 1
Trenton ON K8V 5P4
search@oacs.org

A detailed job description is available at www.oacs.org/webservices/jobs/

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Dordt College

Staff Opening

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This is a full-time, 12-month administrative staff position. A Bachelor of Arts degree is required, and a Master of Arts degree is desired, or an equivalent combination of education and experience in student personnel or closely related field and two years of residence hall experience. Other requirements include a demonstrated knowledge of residence life programs and issues, as well as excellent interpersonal, verbal and written communication skills.

To Apply – Candidates with the ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with other people and a strong commitment to the Reformed faith and the mission of Dordt College should send a cover letter and resume to the Director of Human Resources at:

Dordt College Human Resources
498 4th Avenue NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250
Phone: (712) 722-6011
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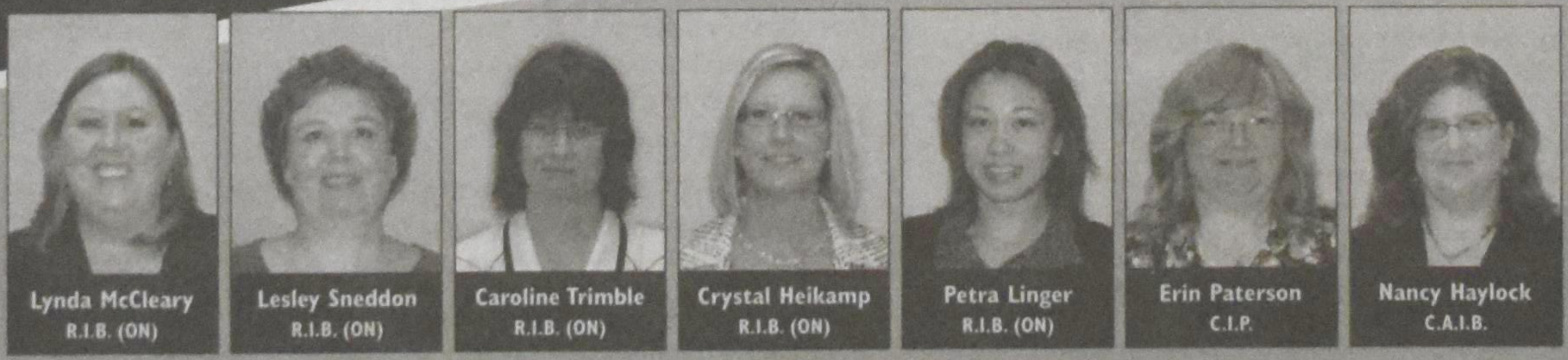

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Events / Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Apr 24-25 Marriage Encounter weekend, **London**, ON. For more information or to register on-line, go to www.reformedme.org or contact Chris & Cindy Otten at 519-393-5163 or by email at Ontario_registration @reformedme.org

May 2 Canada/Netherlands Friendship Day: flag raising ceremony 12 noon at Burlington City Hall, music and anthems by the "Ambassadors".

May 4 Canada/Netherlands Friendship Day celebrations continue at the Royal Botanical Gardens. Doors open at 6 P.M. Program starts at 7 P.M, music by the "Liberation Choir", free admission. For more info visit www.cnfa.ca or contact Jack van der laan at 905 332 7000 or Hans Kloet at 905 336 718.

May 4, 5, 7, 8 Vision Banquet ~ Eurovangelism featuring guest speakers from Albania, Besa Shapllo and Romania, Hardi Kubassek. Locations **Brampton, Orangeville, Cambridge, Brighton**. Call Brian Lise at 1-866-630-6301 for *complimentary* tickets

May 9 Grand Philharmonic Choir of Kitchener, Ontario under the direction of Howard Dyck, will be performing Haydn's Creation. Time 7:30, Place, Centre in the Square, **Kitchener,** Ontario. For tickets call 519-578-1570 or 1-800-265-8977. For any other information: Broer@csolve.net

May 23 Combined nine Male Choirs (over 300 voices) from Southwestern Ontario, will present D. V. a Festival of Praise Concert, singing all Sacred mass numbers, at the Centennial Hall, 555 Wellington Street, London, Ontario. Saturday, at time 7:30 p.m. Doors open 6:30 p.m. Tickets $13.00 from all choir members and host Choir: St. Thomas District Male Choir "Crescendo". For tickets and information please call: (519) 637-4357 or (519) 631-9245 No reserved seating.

May 30 John Knox Christian School, **Brampton**, would like to invite former students & staff to our 50th Anniversary Celebrations. Golf Tournament 7:00 a.m., Open House 4-6 p.m. & dinner 6:30 p.m. See our website for details & registration information:www.bramptonjkcs.org or email us: blessings@bramptonjkcs .org Please bring your JKCS memorabilia for the Open House.

May 30 The Liberation Choir presents our Spring Joy Concert with Stuart Laughton, Trumpet. 7.30 p.m. at St George's Anglican Church, 99 Woolwich Street, **Guelph**. Director – Rob Kinnear, Guest Organist – Chris Dawes, Accompanist – Sharon Sandink. Tickets $15.00 For tickets Contact Tom Overbeek – tom.overbee k@sympatico.ca, 519-941-8518 Or Gail Wemekamp – Gwemekamp@cogeco.ca, 905-635-4129. Tickets available at the door.

May 30, 31 First CRC **Sarnia**, Ontario will be celebrating its 75th anniversary. A banquet will be held on Saturday night with special services held on Sunday. All friends and former members are certainly invited and welcome to join. For more information or to order banquet tickets please e-mail us at 1crc75@gmail.com or call the church office at 519-336-8808.

May 30, 31 Aylmer, ON CRC will be celebrating its 60th anniversary. An evening of entertainment and desserts will be held on Saturday night beginning at 7 p.m. at Immanuel Christian School. Sunday at 10 a.m. we will have a special service led by former pastor Rev. Chris Spoor. Evening service (7 p.m.) of praise and worship led by our present pastors. All friends and former members are invited and most welcome to join in this celebration. For more info, contact: annette@familyflowers.ca or call the church office at 519-773-3025

June 3-5 ACROSS BORDERS an international conference featuring Dutch-Canadian and Dutch-American history and culture, to be held at Redeemer University College, **Ancaster**. For more details please contact Petra Zantingh pzantingh@redeemer.ca 905.648.2131

June 10 Hollandse Dag in the Moorefield Community Centre. See upcoming May issues.

Oct 3 The next Netherlands Bazaar will be held in the Thornhill Community Centre, 7755 Bayview Ave. in **Thornhill**, Ontario

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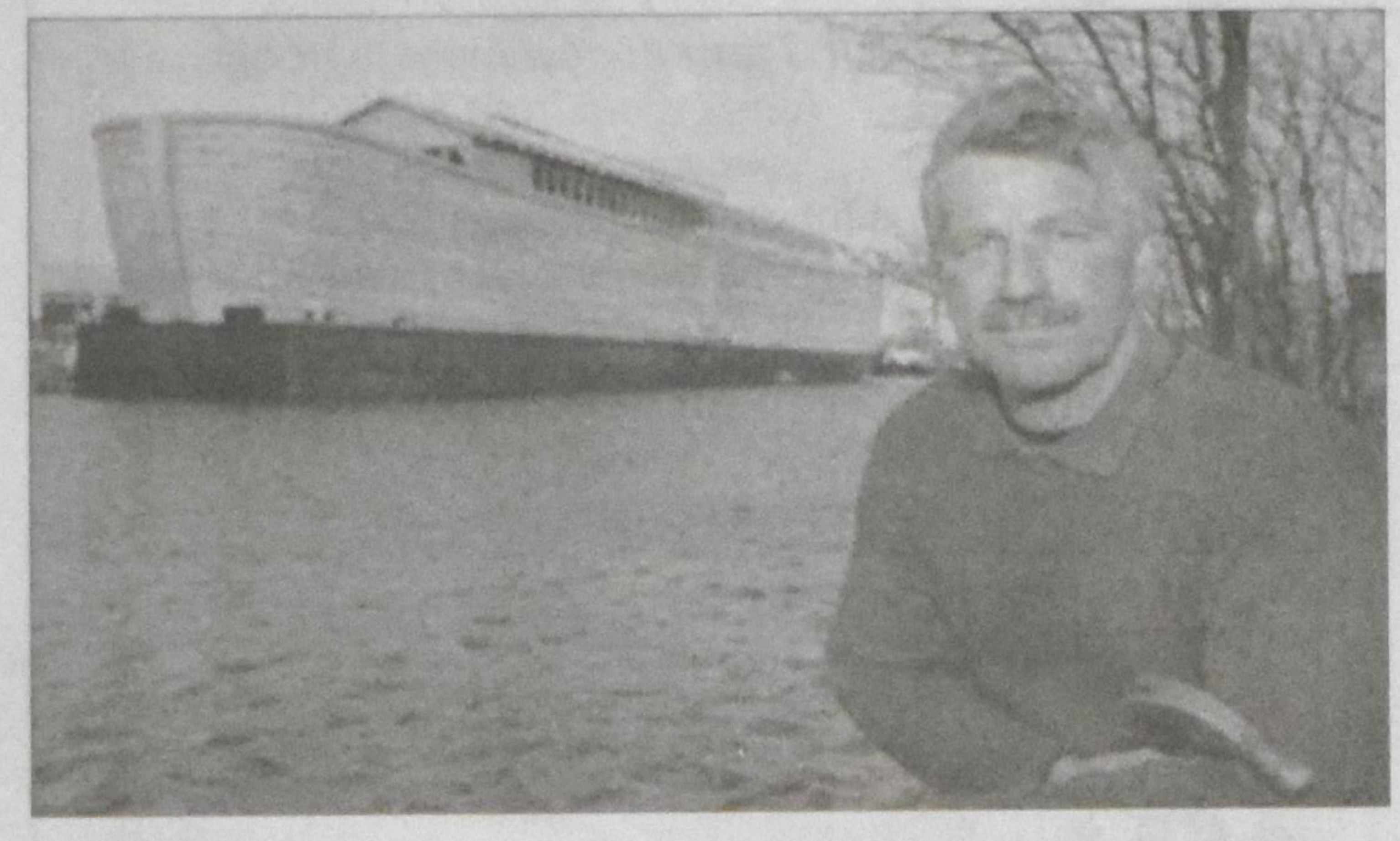
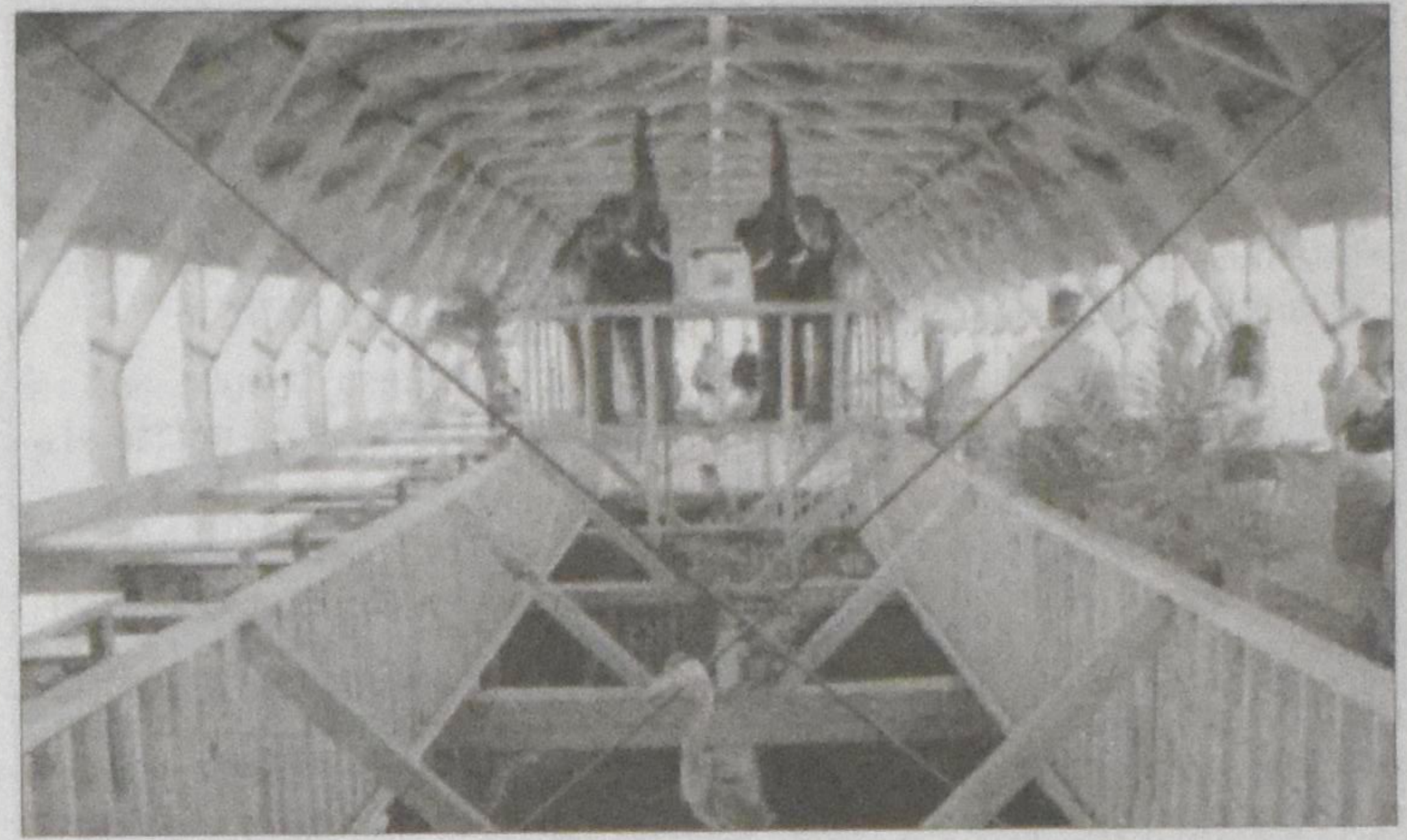
News

Who built the ark? Not Noah, not this time





Walter Miedema

Johan Huibers has built a replica of the biblical ark in Schagen, the Netherlands. A contractor by trade, Huisbers was inspired to build his ark by a dream he had in 1992 of the Netherlands being covered with a tsunami. Huibers began construction in 2005, building the replica almost entirely by himself with the help of his son. Funding was provided by bank loans to the tune of 100,000 Euros (approx. 160,000 Can). Huibers is hoping to recoup some of the expenses by charging admission for tours. The ark was completed toward the end of last year.

Contrary to some reports, the Huibers ark is about half of the scale of the original. Even at this reduction, the replica is massive: at least two thirds the length of a football field and as tall as a three-story house.

Huibers has stated that one of his reasons for undertaking this project was to give witness to his creationist belief in the literal truth of the Bible. There are, however, some difficulties present in the process of creating a faithful replica of the ark. The dimensions given in the sixth chapter of Genesis are simple and straightforward enough: 300 cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. Not everyone, however, agrees on the definition of a cubit: the shortest suggestion is 16.85 inches and the longest 17.5, which makes for a possible variation of 16 and a quarter feet along the ark's length alone.

Also debated (on websites devoted to the topic) is what wood Noah used. Huibers chose to use a mixture of pine and cedar. Modern translations favoured by the Reformed tradition suggest cypress, but others transliterate the Hebrew into "gopher." It's impossible to know for sure.

Some people wonder whether the full-sized, original ark would have been seaworthy. Huisbers's ark will float, although this is due to the fact it was built on a barge. After being completed and on display in Amsterdam for the past couple months, Huisbers's ark was most recently pulled by tugboat to Drachten in Friesland, and in April will move to Sneek.

Huisbers's ark also differs from the biblical original because it has a few modern amenities. An elevator makes the ark fully accessible to all. And even though the ark is only half scale, it includes a fifty-seat movie theatre where visitors can view a short film of the story of Noah and the first ark.

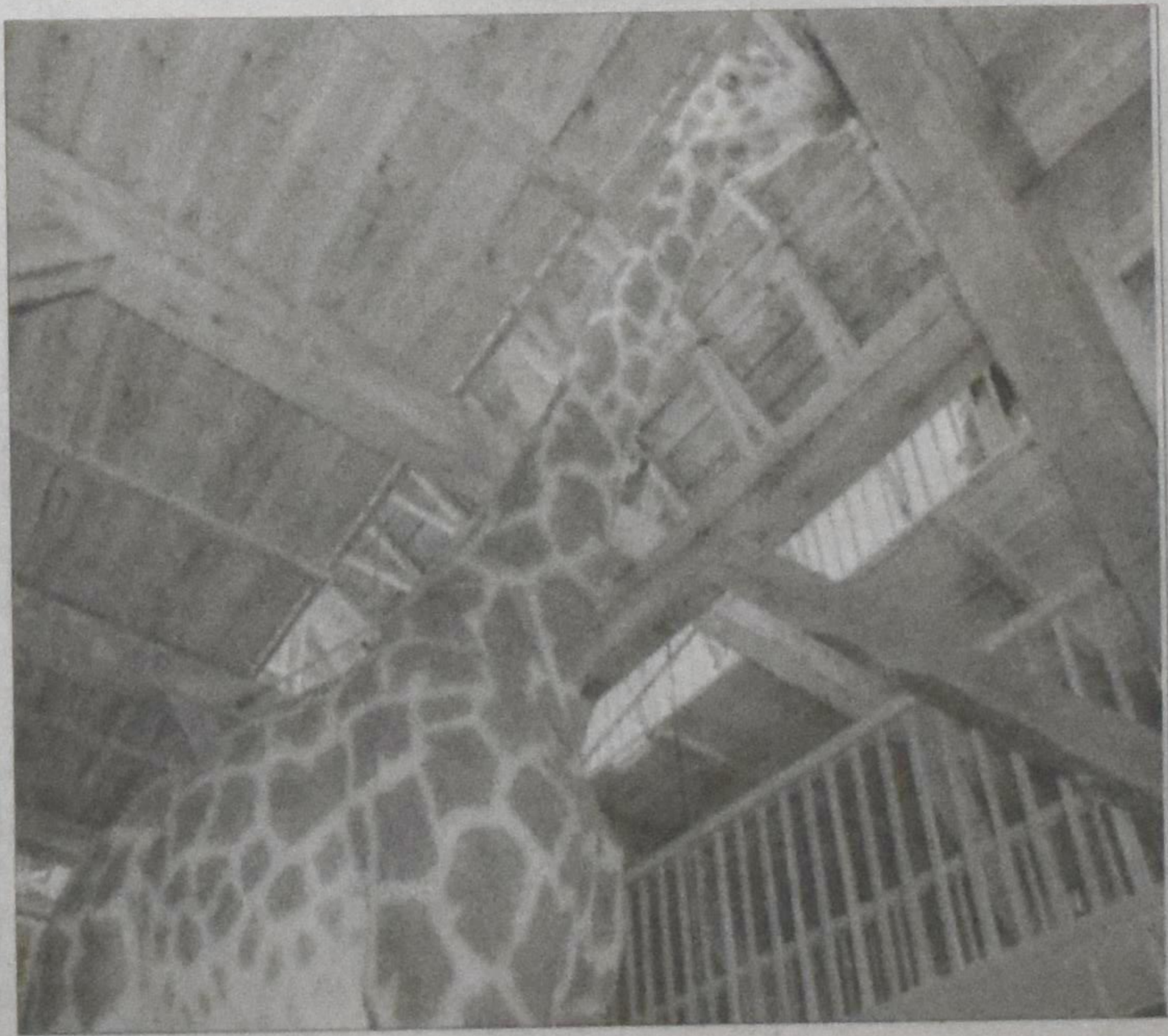
The replica does contain animals, but for the most part these are made of polyester based plastic. The only live animals are a biblically appropriate grouping of goats, a camel, and a few chickens thrown in for good measure. These are contained in a petting zoo on the ark's top deck.

Purpose of second ark

Beyond a testament to the literal truth of the Bible, some may wonder at Huisbers's motives. In the current climate of global warming, the Netherlands is arguably one of the more likely places in the world to experience a flood of biblical proportions. And even though God promised in scripture never again to send a flood that would destroy the world, could it be that Huisbers suspects that his country is tempting a flood? The ark's website debunks this theory quite clearly.

Huisbers is hoping that, in some way, a very large boat will raise the profile of Christianity in his home country, where church attendance has rapidly declined in recent years. If visitors ponder the providence of God that not only saved Noah, his family and all living species from a watery death, but also has saved people from drowning in their sins, then that is worth the cheesiest biblical recreation that might exist.

Walter Miedema is a sometime seminary student on leave of absence and living in Vancouver, BC for a year, where he is working as a caretaker. He writes in his spare time.



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Odds and trends

The Amero – new North American currency?

An American talk radio host, Hal Turner, has twice tried to start a rumour that the U.S. government is secretly creating a currency called the Amero for a new economic union between Canada, the USA and Mexico. A few months ago, he posted photos of the ersatz currency, purportedly from an anonymous contact at the Treasury.

Turner claims that his actions are meant to "prompt discussion about questions related to the monetary interdependence in North America." When three US papers picked up the story, however, they seemed intent only on disproving the rumour: "Amero's nothing but a gag coin"; "Bet your bottom Amero"; and "Amero-ca the Oh, So Dubious." Here, however, our only headline was heart-warmingly earnest, and would have made Turner happy: "Canada would benefit from a common North American currency." On the other hand, we sound kind of like that uncle who always laughs a few minutes after everyone else.

Stick with Jason and John

Researchers at Shippensburg University in PA have just released a study that links unusual first names for men with criminal tendencies. By comparing crime statistics and fifteen thousand first names, the economic professors say that, "regardless of race, juveniles with unpopular names are more likely to engage in criminal activity." Apparently, you'd have a hard time finding anyone named Michael or David in jail, whereas cells are full of people called Ernest, Ivan, Malcolm and Tyrell.

Using social security registration, the government can track the most commonly used names for babies. So far in 2009, more boys have been named Jacob, Ethan and Joshua than anything else. Maybe someone should have sent this study to a few celebrities, and saved Maddox (Angelina Jolie), Pilot (Jason Lee), and Kal-El (Nicolas Cage) a lot of potential trouble with the cops.

Angela Reitsma Bick